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Oct 1895.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF
ST. PETER.

EDITED BY REV. H. A. BIRKS, M.A.

Crown Octavo. 6s.

JUSTIFICATION AND IMPUTED
RIGHTEOUSNESS.

BEING A REVIEW OF
"TEN SERMONS ON THE NATURE AND EFFECTS
OF FAITH,"

By JAMES THOMAS O'BRIEN, D.D.,
Late Bishop of Ossory, Ferns, and Leighlin.

By THE REV. T. R. BIRKS, M.A.,
*Late Knightbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy, Cambridge,
and Honorary Canon of Ely.*

With a Preface

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND
THE LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER.

MACMILLAN AND CO., 1887.

STUDIES
IN THE
LIFE AND CHARACTER OF
ST. PETER.

BY THE REV.
H. A. BIRKS, M.A.,

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FORMERLY ASSISTANT TUTOR IN THE LONDON COLLEGE OF DIVINITY.

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PREFACE.

I SHOULD not like to send out this little book without expressing my thanks to the Rev. C. H. Waller, Principal of the London College of Divinity, for kindly reading the greater part of the work in MS. and giving many useful suggestions. I have also received much help from my brother the Rev. E. B. Birks, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. The comparison in the Introduction between Bible-reading and Shakespeare-reading is taken from a paper read by him before the Cambridge Church Society. Many of the thoughts in Chapter IV. were suggested by a sermon by the Rev. H. C. G. Moule, preached at Trinity Church, Cambridge, and those in Chapter IX. were suggested by a sermon of the Rev. W. S. Lewis at St. Mary's, Hornsey Rise. The only book similar in character that I have seen is the late Dean Howson's "*Horæ Petrinæ*." I purposely refrained from reading it till my own MS. was nearly complete, and so, though I have been much

interested, I am not conscious of any direct borrowing except in the thoughts about the fourfold repetition of the name "Simon, surnamed Peter," in the story of Cornelius.

These studies have been very interesting to myself, and I send them out in the hope that, by God's blessing, they may be helpful to others also, and open their eyes to see some new beauty and power in the Word of God, that lasting treasure-house of all good things.

BOWLS, CHIGWELL.

September 16th, 1887.

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INTRODUCTION.

“ Hold up thy mirror to the sun,
And thou shalt need an eagle’s gaze
So perfectly the polished stone
Gives back the glory of his rays :

“ Turn it, and it shall paint as true
The soft green of the vernal earth,
And each small flower of bashful hue,
That closest hides its lowly birth.

“ Our mirror is a blessed book,
Where out from each illumined page
We see one glorious Image look,
All eyes to dazzle and engage,

“ The Son of God ; and that indeed
We see Him as He is we know,
Since in the same bright glass we read
The very life of things below.”

KEBLE.

MY object in the following papers is simply to render the study of the Bible more real and interesting to readers of intelligence, and I make bold to preface them by a few remarks on Bible-reading generally, addressed to those who at some time or other in their lives, whether they have continued it or not, were trained to read the Bible every day.

2 *Life and Character of St. Peter.*

The Bible is an interesting book. It is quite fashionable to admit as much as this. Those who most utterly ignore its claim of Divine and binding authority on conscience, heart, and life, are often the very loudest in praise of its mere literary excellence. Yet the average Bible-reader, if he would only honestly confess the truth, has often found his Bible very dull. He may hold in theory that the Bible is God's own message to himself, and yet open its pages with reluctance, and close them with relief.

The fault, I need hardly say, is in the reader rather than the book. There is a power in the Bible words that makes itself felt at times, and then the interest revives at once; those who have heard the voice of God coming directly to them from the pages of their Bibles need no human help and no other assurance to prove to them that the Bible is indeed Divine and different from any other book. That the Bible has spoken and does speak to hundreds and thousands in these clear tones of convincing authority must always be its highest evidence. The verse that in some crisis of existence has proved a message of life to the soul will always stand out from the sacred page inscribed, as it were, in letters of gold, and in days of darkness and doubt we may go back to it

and say, "There, in that verse, I heard God speak to me: the Bible, after all, is not a mere dead thing; its words are not vain idle words. They are the words of everlasting life." I know that the Bible has not spoken in this way to all, but even to those who have no personal experience of this peculiar power of the book, it is something to know that the book is gifted with such capacities, that it has (as no other book) changed the whole current of thousands and thousands of lives. This fact—a simple plain historical fact—should certainly secure respectful treatment for the book. It is not a volume to be scoffed at or despised.

The Bible unlocks its secret treasures only to the voice of earnest prayer. The oracle must be consulted in real earnest if we would hear it speak. So it was with St. Augustine. In answer to his own prayers and those of his sainted mother Monica, the Bible spoke to him. He had already been roused to inquiry and earnestness, and then, "when unable one day, in the wild conflict of his thoughts, to bear even the society of his dearest friend, Alypius, he rushed forth into the garden of his lodging, cast himself down under a fig-tree, and passionately cried out for deliverance from the bondage of his sins. Whilst thus engaged he heard, as if from a neighbouring house

4 *Life and Character of St. Peter.*

the voice of a child singing repeatedly, 'Take up and read.' He could not remember that such words were used in any childish game; he bethought himself of the impression made on St. Anthony by the Scriptures which were read in church, and believed that he was himself now called by a voice from heaven. Returning to the house, he seized the volume of St. Paul's epistles, and opened on the text, 'Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' From that moment Augustine felt himself another man." *

In the same way, the Bible spoke home to Wiclif, the day-star of the Reformation, when he roused himself, with the force of a sudden inward conviction, from his bed of sickness, and turning round on the astonished friars, cried, "I shall not die, but live, and declare your evil deeds." So, too, the verse, "The just shall live by faith," stood out in letters of shining gold before the friar Martin Luther, illuminating all his life.

And in our own generation the Bible still retains the same wonderful power. There are times of crisis

* Robertson's "Ecclesiastical History."

and strong necessity, hours of temptation, moments of doubt, days of anxiety, seasons when the spirit is stricken into a great stillness by some sudden bereavement and loss ; then in the deep silence the voice of God in Scripture is once more audible. We turn instinctively for comfort to the written Word, and if we do not find it there, we find it nowhere at all. When I speak of the Bible being uninteresting, I do not speak of times like these ; I speak of ordinary times. How is it that the book, at times intensely powerful, seems often flat and tame ? Again I repeat the fault is in the reader, and not the book. How often the reading of the Bible is the merest form ! The book is opened, and a chapter read, but the mind has not been following the words at all. The act was a religious duty, part, so to speak, of a religious toilet ; it made no more impression on the memory than the winding up of the watch. Both were the usual preliminaries to getting into bed. That was all. I think I have described a far from uncommon experience amongst honest, well-meaning Christian people, with a deep sense of the importance of the written Word and lofty views both of its inspiration and authority. A barren formalism is their curse. It produces its own reaction ; and many, finding the practice so unprofitable,

forego the habit of daily reading to which they have been trained, and beginning by consulting the Bible only when under stress of circumstance or in seasons of spiritual fervour and elation, end very possibly by not consulting it at all. It seems a plausible and proper thing to give up a habit that is purely perfunctory and felt therefore to be hypocrisy. But is it not still possible to make it real? I own there is not much respect shown to the Bible in the way it is often read, and certainly it is very inappropriate for persons to make a claim of special sanctity because they read their chapter of the Bible just as they wind up their watch before they go to bed. But still even this is rather more respectful than not to read the Bible at all—it remains a useful acknowledgment that the Bible is a book worth reading.

The Bible is treated worse than any other book. On the one hand, there is a foolish bibliolatry, and on the other, a foolish apathy and undeserved neglect. With many there is a foolish bibliolatry, a kind of fetish-worship even here. The mere perusal of the Bible is looked on as a charm or talisman, an act of special grace, almost a passport to a better world. Men forget that there is a double command, "Take heed how ye hear" as well as "Take heed what

ye hear." A man may know his Bible by heart from end to end and be no whit the better man. The letter killeth; the spirit giveth life. This superstitious reverence produces a painful reaction on stronger minds. The Bible is taken out of the category of ordinary books, and the reading of it is made a standard badge of piety. To read the Bible is a claim to be thought good, and many fight shy of it on that account; they shun the charge of special piety like that of theft; they scorn all dealing with such stolen goods. The Bible is for others, not for them. I wish the Bible could be treated with as much honesty and common-sense as any other book.

If a man thinks the Bible is the Word of God, or if he does not get any further than merely supposing that it may somewhere or other contain a word from God to him, the matter is still surely sufficiently important to make it a very reasonable thing for him to read that Bible every day that he lives, in hope of lighting on that word. He need not think that he is claiming special piety. He need not profess to read it with special delight. He reads it as a reasonable duty; that is all—and I do not see why any one need be ashamed of doing that. Perhaps some day, after all, he will find the very word he is in need of; and if he does, he

8 *Life and Character of St. Peter.*

certainly will not regret his pains. His chances are plainly greater by reading than by forbearing to read.

Bad and wicked men have read their Bible because of its wonderful poetry, its literary excellence, its insight into human character. There is nothing dishonest in reading as a simple matter of duty, even although the reading bring with it no great delight. The Bible is a book for all, and not for saints alone.

But even when this scruple is overcome, the question still remains, "What is the use of reading the Bible when I can get so little pleasure and instruction from it? It may not be hypocritical to read it, but is it not superfluous, time wasted and thrown away?" Here again we err through impatience. We make a great mistake if we think the profit of Bible-reading is accurately gauged by the emotions it produces in us. The amount of good we obtain from reading the Bible does not altogether, or even in a paramount degree, depend upon the satisfaction and enjoyment the reading is to us. It is a good thing to be able honestly to say with David, "I opened my mouth and drew in my breath, because my delight is in Thy commandments." We cannot always say it honestly. We need not therefore think the reading of the Bible is no good. Slowly and unconsciously it makes us familiar with the

text and outer framework of the Word of God ; it lays the fuel which may in due time be kindled through contact with a warmer soul, or by the direct teaching of the Spirit of the living God, into a very blaze of warmth and spiritual fervour and delight. One man eats his dinner with keen relish and enjoyment ; another with absolute indifference, wholly engrossed in something else ; a third with positive aversion and distaste. Yet all receive some nourishment, and the amount of nourishment is not at all in exact proportion to their state of feeling at the time, though this no doubt will have its influence.

My first contention is that any reading of the Bible is better than none at all. But surely very few will rest content with that. The dry, dull drudgery of reading is so mechanical. It cannot satisfy. Many would seem to regard the Bible simply as religious medicine, a book of severe devotional exercise, to be doled out carefully dose by dose, one chapter only at a time. We need to get rid of this merely conventional and artificial idea. The Bible was not divided into chapters at all till ages after it was written, and the divisions were designed as helps for reference, not as a thick lead lattice to shut out the light. We shall never begin to treat the Bible as a living work, and

consult it as we would an honoured friend, till we have got beyond this medicine-dose, one-chapter theory. The Bible may be medicine, but it is certainly a great deal more. It is a spring of living water, from which whosoever will may freely come and drink. Why should we not sometimes, as leisure presents itself, read through a whole book at a sitting? The whole of the Bible is not so very long, and the separate Gospels can easily be read in a very few hours, and most of the Epistles in less than one. We need to remember the lines of Mrs. Browning, which apply to the Bible as much as to other books,—

“ Mark there ! we get no good
By being ungenerous even to a book
And calculating profits, so much help
For so much reading. It is rather when
We gloriously forget ourselves and plunge
Soul-forward, headlong, into a book’s profound,
Impassioned for its beauty and salt of truth—
’Tis then we get the right good from a book.”

There are many people who would be quite startled at the suggestion of reading a whole book at a sitting, unless, like the book of the prophet Obadiah or St. Paul’s Epistle to Philemon, the chapter and the book should prove to coincide. Even so I am afraid the book of Obadiah at least has not been very widely

read, and few indeed could answer at a moment's notice what it is all about. We never shall understand the Bible rightly till we have learnt to treat it with reverent freedom, never indeed forgetting the claim it makes to be Divine, but only the more determined thereby to treat it with at least as much candour and fairness as any work of merely human authorship.

How we should smile at the man who never read his Shakespeare except a scene at a time. Should we wonder if he did not find him a very interesting writer, if the whole work appeared replete indeed with noble sentiments, but very artificial and disjointed, and frequently very barren of animation and life? We should treat our Bibles with at least as much respect as our great dramatist. True respect is not best shown by very distant behaviour. That is a childish shyness, after all. It is no true respect to read the Bible only in such little portions at a time. We want to enter into it, to wrest from it its hidden lore and teaching, to question it and make it speak to us. How then can this be done? Only by treating the Bible not as a mere religious talisman, but as the real and living voice of living men, as any other work of the great spirits of the past whose genius has secured them immortality.

The man who desired to master his Shakespeare

would read it a play at a time ; but he would never be content with that. Passages of peculiar beauty he would commit to memory. At times he would take up some special character and study that. Sometimes he would take a portion for the minutest study phrase by phrase, examining the language almost microscopically, and gaining information from every external source ready to his access. Besides all this, knowing the general plot of the plays, he might, by way of perfecting his knowledge of the language and thought of the great master of human passion, adopt a plan of reading one scene every day, however busy he might be, simply to steep his mind in the words and ideas of one he had learnt to reverence and love. -He would adopt this plan *on principle*, not because he expected to gain great pleasure or great profit every day, but simply because he felt sure that in the long run he would be much the wiser and the better man.

The Bible should be studied in the same spirit of earnest inquiry. It has yet stronger, deeper claims upon our reverent attention. So far as the Bible is separate from other books, it must be treated differently ; and only God Himself, by the power of His Spirit, can reveal its inner meaning to the hearts of men ; and this He is pledged to do in answer to their

prayers. But so far as the Bible is on a level with other books, it should be treated like them, with the same kind of interest. It is here that human help is of the greatest use. In all these matters of human interest, study of language, of character, of mutual bearing of phrase on phrase, one man can help another, and he is bound to do so as far as he has power.

The following practical studies are one more humble effort in this direction. They make no profession of learning, no claim to completeness. They are simply plain, practical studies in the life and character of St. Peter, addressed to those who take some interest in Bible-studies, and wish to have it deepened and increased.

I have designedly avoided the moot subjects of academic criticism: the genuineness of the Second Epistle (though I believe it to be genuine); the meaning of the preaching to the spirits in prison; the relation of 2 Peter ii. and the Epistle of Jude; the meaning of Babylon in 1 Peter. I have not learning or ability to make any worthy addition to what has already been wisely or unwisely written or said on points like these. I leave it to others to press forward to these higher fields of slippery, and dangerous, and subtle criticism. I am content if on a lower level

I may but linger lovingly and pick a few sweet blossoms here and there, which others may indeed have noticed, but not stooped to cull, intent upon an enterprise more arduous. My little posy is put together clumsily enough; it is destined doubtless, like other posies, soon to fade; indeed, although so freshly gathered, it already bears some traces of the hot and soiling hand of the collector; the truths presented here are not so beautiful as where they grow. Still it is offered for what it is worth, and if it draws the attention of any stay-at-homes to those alluring fields where each for himself may find like treasures in perfect freshness, fragrance, and beauty, it will have done its work, for those soft meadow-lands of Scripture meditation have realised the poet's dream, and bloom and blossom in perennial spring.

The Scripture portraiture of human character is one not merely of great intellectual interest and fascination, but it has a further intrinsic value as evidence of truth. The Scripture characters stand out before us in vivid reality. No sculpture, no painting, can ever give such a lifelike impression of truth, for these word-pictures of the holy book are simply marvellous. Statues and pictures at the best are stationary things. They fix upon a point of life, a phase of feeling, an incident of history;

they seize it and embody it in form and colour before our eyes. The fleeting and transitory is rendered permanent, and that is wonderful enough. The Bible pictures are more than this. The Bible not only shows us real and living men. It shows how they grow. There is a mystery and fascination about all growth. What is more wonderful? The growth of a favourite flower or of a pet animal may be a source of eager interest, but how much more the growth of living souls destined to play their part throughout eternity! The Bible most fully opens out to us this source of interest; it traces the development of human character. We see men growing up before our very eyes. This is a special strength and charm of Holy Writ, and if of Holy Writ, of holy writers too. The book and the men cannot be kept apart.

How could those who were either the victims of a tremendous folly, or guilty of a tremendous falsehood, delineate a character so perfectly drawn in every line, as, for instance, the portrait of St. Peter as he is shown to us in Scripture narrative? For my own part, I shall refuse to believe that any Jewish peasant or Greek doctor who could draw the picture of such a high-souled, thoroughly human hero with such consistent accuracy, beauty, and delicacy of touch,

could be either the victim of a gross delusion himself, or persistently engaged in forcing a great and useless imposture on the unwilling ears of men only too ready to kill him for his foolish, unprofitable pains. In all these pictures of human character, there is nothing of the vapourings and rhapsody, of the long-drawn-out eulogiums and fulsome flatteries of an excited enthusiasm. How the Bible pictures of early martyrs—true pictures, I take it, for they bear the stamp of truth upon their very face—contrast with the later pictures of monkish chroniclers, where truth is mingled with pious enthusiasm, or possibly with pious fraud. Here in the Bible story we have the solid, enduring simplicity of pure and naked truth.

That is one value of studying the Bible characters. It makes us feel the force of Bible truth, for only truthful men could write a narrative like this. But certainly the study of a character like that of Peter ought to do more for us than merely this. We can hardly study such a life, and yet entirely escape its influence. The study may occupy our intellect and confirm our faith, but if it stops short there, we shall have missed the best and highest fruit of our toil. We have in the great Apostle a noble example for our own lives; and as we come to know and love him more

from patient pondering upon his conflicts and his struggles, his hopes and fears, and humbled following of his great Master Christ, the knowledge of his life gives a fresh force and power to his words, and they strike home to conscience and to heart with strength unfelt before. Instead of a mere abstract exhortation, we begin to hear in the words of Peter the voice, as it were, of a living friend, rich in his human sympathy, and glowing with the ardour of an undaunted hope. We feel, as it were, the grasp of a powerful man laid gently and firmly on our shoulders, and bringing us to Christ Himself. He seems to draw us to his loving Master and speak to us in words of ripe experience—"Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Him Who is my Lord and thine, Who is my Saviour and thine, to Whom be all the glory now and for ever. Amen."

CHAPTER I.

THE NAME PETER CONSIDERED AS A PARADOX.

“Thou art Peter.”—MATT. xvi. 18.

THE Good Shepherd calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. When God had called Abram from Ur of the Chaldees, He changed his name to Abraham. When He led Jacob back from Padan-aram, He changed his name to Israel. So in the New Testament, when He foretold the birth of the Baptist, He said, “His name shall be called John;” and when Christ called the sons of Zebedee, He surnamed them Boanerges.

There is a great difference between God’s names for people and man’s names. Man looks on the outward appearance; the Lord looks on the heart. Human nicknames and sobriquets where not the result of mere adulation (such as “the Good,” “the Great,” “the Magnificent”), generally seize on some striking external peculiarity either of body or mind or circumstance—Hunch-back, Lion-heart, Lackland,

and the like. God's names are different. They generally go in the teeth of mere human judgment and bring to light something deeper beyond.

What human judgment would have dared to name that old man Abram, almost a centenarian, with his childless wife Sara, and one wild lad Ishmael, "the father of a great multitude"? Surely his neighbours must have smiled to see him assume that style. Yet God was right, man wrong.

What human judgment would have dared to name that timid shepherd Jacob, sending his droves of sheep before his face, if so be he might appease his justly aggrieved red-brother, "A Prince with God"! That cowering supplanter, a Prince with God! Yet God Himself declares, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; this is My name for ever, and this is My memorial throughout all generations." The names of Jacob and of God are linked for ever in one. Again God is right, man wrong.

Or to turn to the New Testament. What human judgment would have dared to name that stern Nazarite, the Baptist, with his wild dress and food and scathing denunciation of all that was mean and false, by a name so sweet and gentle as John, which means "the grace of Jehovah"? His relatives protested from the

first. Or why, again, when John the son of Zebedee came to Him, a man whose name we instinctively associate with gentleness and love, did our Saviour surname him of all people Boanerges, which is by interpretation "a son of thunder"?

Yet here again God was right, man wrong. The mission of the Baptist was, in the truest sense, a mission of grace and mercy. "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." From John the son of Zebedee we have learnt perhaps the most terrible phrase in the whole compass of Holy Writ; I mean, "the wrath of the Lamb." Again, as ever, the judgment of God is true. Again God is right, man wrong.

There is one name above all other names of which this specially holds good. What uninstructed human judgment would have owned in that helpless Babe, lying in the rude straw, amidst the hubbub of an Eastern caravanserai, the Saviour of a ruined world? The very angels wondered at the sight. The name Jesus of all names surely appeared the strangest of paradoxes. How did it look to the crowds who saw it emblazoned above the Cross of His shame: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"? We know how it seemed. "He saved others; Himself He cannot

save." "If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us." The very robbers crucified with Him did cast the name in His teeth. The name Jesus, from that time to this, has been the butt of every reproach. But yet again God is right, man wrong. The name Jesus is above every name, and every tongue shall own that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

"Jesu! Thou Joy of loving hearts,
Thou Fount of life, Thou Light of men,
From the best bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to Thee again.
Thy truth unchanged hath ever stood,
Thou savest them that on Thee call;
To them that seek Thee Thou art good,
To them that find Thee all in all."

The name of Jesus is the most wonderful of all the names that God has ever bestowed, the one absorbing object of contemplation and joy to all His followers, the greatest revelation and yet the greatest mystery. The name of Jesus is indeed

" . . . the Rock on which we build,
Our shield and hiding-place."

But we must also remember that on the foundations of the holy city, the new Jerusalem, are graven the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb; the whole Church is built on the foundation of apostles and

prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. It behoves us to study with care all names bestowed by our Lord, because He is truth, and they go to the root of things. Sure I am we may learn very much by studying this surname graven for Peter, ever as it shall be in heaven. And I would simply endeavour to follow out the line of thought suggested about these other names. Surely the name of Peter has in it something of paradox. (Why was this Simon surnamed "Rock"? A rock is unshaken, steadfast, imperturbed. What strikes a superficial observer most on the face of St. Peter's character is lack of steadiness, yet he is singled out and called "the Rock." No one can doubt the name Peter implies stability of character. No one can doubt that St. Peter was often changing his mind. How reconcile this difference, and solve this paradox?

Instances of strong oscillations in Peter's thoughts and words occur to every one. At one moment he says, "Depart from me, O Lord;" at the next "he leaves all and follows Christ." At one moment he desires to come to Jesus on the waters; at the next he is frightened and almost sinks. At one moment he confesses Christ, as Son of the living God; at the next he rebukes Him, as though He were but a

man like himself. At one moment he says, "Thou shalt never wash my feet;" at the next, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." At one moment he is ready to fight the whole band of soldiers almost alone; at the next he is shrinking away before one little maid. Even after the Resurrection, at one moment he admits the Gentiles to equal privileges with the Jews, and shortly afterwards he is ready to stultify the effect of his concession by separating himself from Gentile company. No one can doubt that Peter failed in steadfastness; but there are different kinds of unsteady characters.)

There is the slothful, indolent man, who will not take the trouble to think for himself about anything, who simply floats helplessly to and fro with the ebb and flow of public opinion, or acquires a sort of steadiness only by becoming the consistent tool of some far stronger character. There is the man who knows what is right, and has opinions of his own, but who has not the courage of his own convictions. Unhappy indeed is he, because most conscious of his misery. The wish of his friends, some secret sin, or some delight of this world weighs more with him than the promptings of his neglected conscience, and constantly makes him swerve from the path his judgment marked out. There is the painstaking,

diffident man, always most anxious to do what is right, but never quite able to make up his mind what is the right course after all. The man who sees twenty sides to a question where others only see one or at the most two sides. The man who sees all round a subject and never to the heart of it. A thoroughly circumspect man without the true intuition of one who is born to lead. The man who always prefers the judgment of others, perhaps far his own inferiors in ability, to his own judgment. The man, in short, who, while he may be blessed with a tender conscience and great mental power, lacks nerve and force and energy to turn it to account. Put Cicero beside Cæsar, and you may see what I mean.

These are all forms of character that lead to hesitancy, vacillation, and unsteadiness. None of them fit St. Peter's case.

No sloth or indolence caused him to fail. There is an impulsive, whole-hearted energy about the entire man which utterly forbids the thought; it breaks out in his very faults. An indolent man would have kept on shipboard and not risked sinking in the sea. An indolent man would have kept his sword sheathed or waited for orders to draw it. An indolent man would have slunk off from questioning, not answered with

cursing and oaths, "I know not the man." Whatever we think of his sin—and we cannot think worse of it than he did himself when he went out and wept bitterly—we cannot deny that even that was marked by some energy and some decidedness.

Again, it was not from lack of natural courage that Peter failed. It is hardly the fault we should look for in a hardy fisherman, accustomed to battle with all the sudden squalls upon that inland lake. He cowered, it is true, before a little maid. And how many more who have stood before men have fallen before women! Yet only a short hour before he showed his manly courage. A whole company of Roman soldiers, the dread of the whole world, and a mixed throng besides, armed strongly with staves, came out to capture our Lord. In His little company was no defensive armour, only two swords, the odds were hopelessly against them, yet Peter never stopped for one moment to think of that. His courage then knew no bounds. Oh, there was daring enough, a noble daring, in Peter's character.

Nor yet, again, did he fail from lack of self-confidence. Quite the reverse. He fell through excess of it. He clung desperately to his own notion of what the Christ should be like. That notion shut out all thought of an ignominious death.

The very tenacity of his conviction, through Satan's craft, allured him to his fall. In the high-priest's palace his false ideal was shattered at a blow. That round which all the ardent hopes and aspirations of his passionate, powerful nature had clung and twined themselves seemed gone in a moment from him, and he was utterly unstrung. He had not overrated himself when he said, "Lord, with Thee I am ready* to go to prison and to death. I will lay down my life for Thy sake." So he would have done in his own way. He was ready to fight for his Lord, to die for Him sword in hand. But our Saviour had refused his offer of service in the garden. That was the bitter point. St. Peter could bear the strain of action; but for his Lord to go where he could not follow Him, about a work he could not share and could not understand, and for himself to have to sit down quietly and watch sights which his very soul loathed, and with the knowledge that there was nothing more to do—that unnerved him. If our Lord had bidden him do some great thing, he would have done it. To sit and watch—that was too much for him. He could not do even that, not even for one hour. "My Lord" (so he might

* This is the true emphasis of the words as they stand in the Greek.

phrase it to himself) “has let Himself down to *this*—to be bound, mocked, cuffed, spat upon. My every remonstrance He has spurned; my proffered devotion He has publicly declined. What is the use of doing any more?” Satan was waiting for this very moment, to prompt him to vent disappointment in despairing denial. It was Satan’s hour and the power of darkness. Peter had slept when he might have prayed, and so he fell. Yet all the time he really loved our Lord. It was a partial, and not a total eclipse. Yet all the time his was not by nature a coward’s character. We cannot indeed venture to analyse his feelings or say exactly how he came to fail so terribly, but amongst the strange whirl of conflicting thoughts, the stupefying bewilderment of the scenes of that terrible night, I think we cannot be wrong in saying that there was something beyond and above mere craven terror, something perhaps almost of disappointed pique at the refusal of his offered help that left him so unsettled and so unstrung. And the point to be noticed is that this very same tenacity of conviction when, through the teaching of the risen Lord and the enlightening of the blessed Comforter, the truth broke in upon his soul, pre-eminently fitted him to be a chief foundation-stone in Christ’s holy Church.

I do not mean to say there was no cowardice in Peter's fall, only that naturally he was far removed from a cowardly man. The hero who has never felt fear is rare indeed and hardly human, I think. Nelson asked, "What is fear? I never saw it," but that was when he was quite a little boy. The bravest of men, heroes like the lamented Gordon of Khartoum, most naïvely own to moments of fear so acute as to amount to actual physical suffering. All I maintain concerning Peter is this: mere craven cowardice is no complete account of why he fell. The way in which he slipped into his error is well worth noticing. He sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire. His open service had been rejected; it only remained to act the part of a secret spy. Some opportunity might still arise of helping Christ. At present he saw none. To secure this one remaining possibility, equivocation, duplicity, and double-facedness were forced upon him. A spy honest to his friends can never be thoroughly honest and true to his enemies. Acting a part was not by any means natural to Peter's character. What wonder that, in his anxiety to act it well, he overdid the part, threw into his hypocrisy a vehemence and energy that all unconsciously reacted on himself! Once in the false position, how very hard to retract! This view is

admirably worked out in Dr. Hanna's "Last Day of our Lord's Passion."

Tenacity of conviction combined with great energy and forwardness of action and whole-hearted simplicity of character are the requisites above all else for the promoting of thoroughly new ideas amid concentrated opposition of every kind. The one fault to which such a character would be most prone is intolerance towards the failings of others who saw less clearly and acted less decidedly than he himself. Against this fault the memory of his own very grievous fall would be an ever-present safeguard.

It is needless to point out how his whole after-career bears out this view of his character: how he did gladly follow his Lord to prison and to death, and how unflinching boldness was found ever side by side with most touching and beautiful humility.

The storms sweep most fiercely over the deepest seas. The billows are often highest where the great depths underneath remain most undisturbed. Thus a surface view of Simon's character presents it to us as full of strange inconsistencies. A closer inspection convinces us that our Saviour read rightly his inmost character in naming him "the Rock."

CHAPTER II.

HOW THE NAME PETER WAS BESTOWED.

“He added to Simon a surname, Man of Rock.”—MARK i. 16.

“But Jesus, having looked on him, said, Thou art Simon, the son of John; thou shalt be Cephas, which is interpreted Man of Rock.”—JOHN i. 42.

“Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”—MATT. xvi. 17—19.

THE Good Shepherd calleth His *own* sheep by name. It is a claim of ownership. So with regard to Cyrus in the Old Testament. “I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me,” is a claim of ownership, and closely joined with the verse, “That saith of Cyrus, He is *My* shepherd, and shall perform all *My* pleasure.” As the first act by which Adam proclaimed his delegated rule in paradise was

naming the animals there, so the first act by which Christ, the second Adam, proclaimed His commission as Teacher from God, was by surnaming His Apostles.

Before we go on to consider the circumstances in which this name was given, look at the name itself, and the way it is used throughout the New Testament. Simon, or Simeon, was the Apostle's natural name. He was surnamed Cephas, or Peter, the first the Aramaic, the second the Greek, word for "stone." And he was the son of "Jona," or of "John," as well-supported readings have it. Simon means "hearer," and John "the grace of Jehovah." So if we adopt the Revisers' reading, we have the hearer, the son of God's grace, surnamed a Man of Rock. Now turn to the seventh chapter of St. Matthew, the twenty-fourth verse, and you read, "Therefore whosoever heareth these words of Mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house on a rock. And the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock."

Was not the teachableness of St. Peter the great secret of his stability? He made many mistakes, but his was always the open ear to listen to rebuke. The

one time he refused to listen was the one time he fell. In no character can we see more clearly the progress of Christian education in its highest sense. A hearer, a doer, and so finally a Rock.

I have thought it right to mention the reading "son of John," as it has been accepted by our Revisers. At the same time, "son of Jona" is undisputed in Matthew xvi., and if we are to allow Peter's father only one name—and on the face of it it is not likely he should have been both Jona and John—Jona certainly should have the stronger claim. Our early English commentator Bede has some interesting remarks upon this nomenclature in a sermon preached at Jarrow, in Durham, more than eleven hundred years ago.

"Jesus answered and said, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona."

"It is certain then that after true confession of Christ there remain the true rewards of blessedness. Let us now consider attentively what and how great is that name with which He glorifies the perfect confessor of His name, that by a true confession we may deserve to be partakers of this also. 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona.' Bar-Jona in Syriac signifies 'son of a dove.' And rightly is the Apostle Peter called 'son of a dove,' for the dove is without guile, and Peter followed

his Lord in prudent and pious guilelessness, mindful of that precept of guilelessness and truth which he and his fellow-disciples received from the same Master, 'Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves.' And surely, since the Holy Spirit descended upon the Lord in the form of a dove, he is rightly called 'son of a dove' who is shown to have been filled with the grace of the Spirit.

"And justly does the Lord reward him who loved Him and confessed Him by declaring that he who asserted Him to be Son of the living God is son of the Holy Spirit. Of course no faithful man doubts that these two sonships are very different. For the Lord Christ is Son of God by nature, Peter—as also the other elect—son of the Holy Spirit by grace. Christ is Son of the living God because He is born of Him. Peter is son of the Holy Spirit because he is born again of Him. Christ is Son of God before all time, for He is that virtue of God and wisdom of God which saith, 'The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way before His works of old.' Peter is son of the Holy Spirit from the time when, illumined by Him, he received the grace of Divine knowledge. And because the will of the Holy Trinity is one and the operation one, when the Lord had said, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona'—that is, son of the grace of the Spirit—He

rightly proceeded to say, 'For flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.' " *

And now a word or two about the way in which the names are used. St. John almost invariably combines the two, like Peter himself in his second letter—Simon Peter. In the other Evangelists the name Simon occurs frequently in the early chapters before the commission of the Twelve, notably so in St. Mark. Afterwards Peter is the prevailing name, until the time of his temptation and fall. Here the title of privilege and dignity is once more dropped. The disciple is addressed in terms of affectionate warning and exhortation by the name which he had known from his childhood. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you." "Simon, sleepest thou?" "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon." "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?"

In the Acts, with two remarkable exceptions—first in the account of the conversion of Cornelius and second

* This translation is taken from the Christian Knowledge Society's useful series of "Fathers for English Readers:" "The Venerable Bede" (Rev. G. F. Browne), p. 152. The whole sermon is quoted there at length, and is well worthy of perusal, as a sample of English teaching in the eighth century.

Many interesting points of comparison might be noted between the prophet Jonah in the Old Testament and the Apostle Peter in the New.

in the speech of James in the council at Jerusalem—Peter, and Peter alone, is universally used. In the speech of St. James and St. Peter's own second letter the form Symeon appears.

But now we pass on to relate how the name was bestowed. The verse at the head of the paper from St. Mark speaks merely in general terms. We must look for details to the passages below.

The first giving of the title is told us by St. John. After our Lord had returned from His temptation, the Baptist bore witness to him—"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Andrew and another (no doubt the author of this account) heard what their master said, and followed Jesus, and stayed with Him. Andrew first finds his own brother Simon, and he brought him to Jesus, assuring him that Jesus was the Christ. Our Lord, beholding (looking in) him, said, "Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas" (or John); "thou shalt be called Cephas."

We know what an impression first meetings and first words often make upon us. The clear, loving gaze of our Lord attracted Peter irresistibly. Another such look recovered him afterwards when he was going astray. And we may notice that St. Mark, who wrote his Gospel under St. Peter's guidance, more than the

other Evangelists describes the looks of our Lord. "Thou shalt be called Cephas." The words awaken hope. They are a prophecy, a destiny. As yet the two names run on side by side. The time was coming when it should no longer be "Thou shalt be called Cephas," but, "I say unto thee, Thou art Peter" (πέτρος), "and on this rock" (πέτρα) "will I build My Church" (Matt. xvi. 18).

This blessing of the Apostle has given rise to endless discussion, hinging on the question of the identity or non-identity of πέτρος and πέτρα—St. Peter and the Rock—and rendered more than usually involved because of the difficulty of regarding the question on its own merits apart from the pretensions of Rome and the Roman doctrine of Petrine supremacy.

But there are perhaps other questions, in themselves equally interesting, which, being outside the range of controversy, do not receive the notice they deserve. First, what was there so wonderful in Peter's confession of our Lord? Had not Nathanael long before this said almost, if not quite, as much: "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel"? Yet no such special blessing is accorded him, and if he be Bartholomew, as we are compelled to believe, his name appears far down on the Apostolic list. Peter's own

brother Andrew had said long before, "We have found the Messiah." He had received no special blessing then. Why was St. Peter's confession so singled out for recognition by our Lord?

We cannot accuse the Lord of being unfair or arbitrary in His bestowal of recommendation and praise. We cannot for a moment suppose that there was any favouritism in that little college of His first followers. The clue to the problem is not far to seek. The grandeur of Peter's confession consists in the time when it was made. Grant that the declaration, "Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel," is practically as wide and full and deep as St. Peter's voice, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It does not follow that the faith of Nathanael was equal to the faith of him whom Jesus blessed. Faith must be measured not only by what it says, but by the difficulties it has been required to surmount. A child of seven may say the Creed, and a scholar of seventy may say the very same words. But they do not mean the same thing to one and to the other. The faith that has not yet encountered any peril, and the faith that has met and overcome a thousand difficulties, are both very beautiful, have each (may we not say so?) a beauty peculiar to themselves. But they are not

the same. The faith that has conquered deserves, and shall have, a reward unknown to and beyond the faith that never was attacked. The confessions of Andrew and Nathanael were made with the fresh zeal of neophytes ; that of St. Peter was made with the mature judgment of a tried follower. Their confessions were made before opposition to Christ had at all developed itself, his when that opposition was now unalterably pronounced. Theirs under the influence of the Baptist's strong recommendation, at the time when the Baptist was at the zenith of his power and popularity ; his after the Baptist himself had come to be shaken in his trust, and to inquire, "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?"—his after all the then rulers of the nation had combined against our Lord and rejected His claims, nay, more than this, at a time when many of His own followers had gone back from Him, tried by His hard sayings, when even the twelve seemed to be somewhat wavering ; then did St. Peter stand forth unmoved amidst the universal shaking and win for himself this blessedness, pronounced by the lips of infallible truth to be a Rock indeed, unshaken in the storm.

It was something then, before the Transfiguration and after so much to discourage, to grasp the fact of

Christ's Divinity, to own Him as no mere earthly anointed one, whether prophet, priest, or king, but as One direct from heaven, Son of the living God. It is great emergencies that call forth the greatness of men. Now in a time of crisis St. Peter proved his worth. He had not learnt all about Christ; he had not learnt yet that He must suffer; but what he had learnt he had grasped, and had it ready for use. The confession of Thomas afterwards—"Thomas saith unto Him, My Lord and my God"—is even more grand, more distinct, but then St. Thomas had before him the visible tokens of the vanquished tomb. Because he had seen he believed. St. Peter had no such encouragement; and thus this noble confession of his must ever stand by itself, a thing unparalleled. The accounts of it are therefore well worthy a careful comparison. We place them side by side.

The account of St. Matthew here is the fullest and most complete. He is the only Evangelist who gives both Peter's blessing and Peter's rebuke, and thus brings out in the strongest way the contrast between St. Peter the Rock and St. Peter the Stumbling-block, for that is the true force of the word *σκάνδαλον*, translated "offence." A stone is a good thing to build upon, but a bad thing to trip over. And we note that our

When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, He asked His disciples saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged He His disciples that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ.

From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee. But He turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan; thou art an offence unto Me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

And Jesus went out, and His disciples, into the towns of Cæsarea Philippi. And by the way He asked His disciples saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist, but some say Elias, and others, one of the prophets. And He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. And He charged them that they should tell no man of Him.

And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He spake that saying openly. And Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned about and looked on His disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind Me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things of God, but the things that be of men.

And it came to pass as He was alone praying, His disciples were with Him. And He asked them saying, Whom say the people that I am? They answering said, John the Baptist, but some say Elias, and others say that one of the old prophets is risen again. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God. And He straitly charged them and commanded them to tell no man that thing, saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and of the chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

very privileges and blessings will condemn us unless we use them aright.*

St. Mark's account is briefest in Peter's confession, fullest in Peter's rebuke. Especial stress is laid on the publicity and openness of our Lord's announcement of His future suffering and the publicity and openness of Peter's rebuff. It was before the whole Twelve, deliberately uttered in the full consciousness that they were there, and after our Lord had looked upon them all. It is pointed out as markedly a public rebuke. The whole emphasis is laid upon that.

The original Greek brings out another point. The word rendered "straitly charged" is the same as the word translated "rebuke." "Jesus rebuked them;" "Peter began to rebuke Him;" "Jesus rebuked him." The threefold repetition of this one word † puts in the strongest light how Peter's feelings got the mastery of his respect, how completely for the moment he forgot his proper place and answered rebuke with rebuke.

The third Evangelist, St. Luke, passes by this part

* There is another contrast brought out strongly in the original. Πέτρος εἶπε, Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστός. . . . Καὶ γὰρ δὲ σοὶ λέγω, ὅτι σὺ εἶ Πέτρος. The words of Christ *exactly correspond* with those of Peter, and illustrate the text "Whosoever therefore, shall confess Me . . . him will I confess" (St. Matt. x. 32).

† ἐπετίμησε . . . ἤρξατο ἐπιτιμᾶν . . . ἐπετίμησε.

of the subject entirely, but adds one most interesting detail about the circumstances. His is the priestly Gospel, and it is characteristic of him to mention the prayers of our Lord. Our Saviour was entering on a new stage in the education of His followers. One truth they had grasped. He had another and harder truth to impart to them. He prefaced this fresh instruction with special prayer to God.

The silence of this Evangelist is quite as remarkable as what he actually says.

There are critics of great ability, whose head-quarters are at Tübingen, who have tried to represent the Christianity of St. Peter and the Christianity of St. Paul as opposite, antagonistic forces. St. Mark, according to universal tradition, wrote his Gospel under the guidance of Peter. St. Luke is known as a constant companion of Paul. We thus have a very remarkable phenomenon. The Petrine Gospel lays its whole stress on Peter's defects; the Pauline Gospel speaks only of Peter's excellence. What do the Tübingen school make of that? and is it not a striking proof of Peter's humility?

St. John does not mention the incident at all, but, as is so often the case, he gives another parallel to it, an earlier confession of the Apostle beside the Lake of

Galilee, following the miracle of the five thousand and the hard discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum.

“From that time,” we are told, “many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for he it was that should betray Him, being one of the twelve.”

It may startle us to find this same confession in Peter's mouth at an earlier date passed by without a word of special commendation; but turning to the Revised Version, we find the confession not quite the same. The right reading would seem to be here, “We believe and are sure that Thou art the Holy One of God.” This is a confession which Peter adopted from the mouth of the men possessed, who cried, “Art Thou come to torment us before the time? We know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God.” The devils believe and tremble. And now Jesus says,

"One of you is a devil." This earlier anonymous warning to the archtraitor Judas—what tenfold force and piquancy it must have given to those later words addressed directly to Peter, "Get thee behind Me, Satan"!

It opens out also a wonderful difference in the manner in which Christ dealt with the one and the other Apostle, the first and the last on the list. To follow it out would take up too much space here, and I reserve it for a chapter by itself.

Now, having cleared the ground, we must proceed to the directly controversial matter: the blessing of St. Peter and what it means.

"Thou art Peter" (*Πέτρος*), "and upon this rock" (*πέτρα*) "will I build My Church."

The Romanist argument is this: *πέτρος* is plainly the same as *πέτρα*. In Aramaic the word Cephass would be the very same, or, granting, if you will, that our Lord spoke to Peter in Greek, the difference is due to the necessity for the masculine termination *ος* for the masculine name Peter. The Rock is Peter. The Church is founded on him. The foundation Rock must last as long as the superimposed edifice. If not, of course the building falls. Peter is dead; the actual living Peter has gone from us. We want a

visible prolongation of Peter's presence in our midst. Where shall we look for it? Plainly in his successors, the Roman pontiffs upon their papal throne.

It is more than doubtful whether the holy Apostle St. Peter would be very much flattered by this pseudo-elongation of his own distinct personality. Compare St. Peter refusing the homage of Cornelius—"Rise up, for I myself also am a man"—with the long line of later Roman pontiffs, placed on the high altar of St. Peter's Church while all the Roman hierarchy kiss their feet, those feet that trample the altar of God. But the contrast between the holy Apostle and his successors—many of them, by the confession of Romanists themselves, his most unholy successors—is too patent to dwell upon. The argument which would put them in his place is not only revolting to the moral sense, but utterly illogical and unsound. St. Peter is not dead in the Romanist's sense. If God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a God not of the dead, but of the living, surely He is the God of Peter still. Peter is still living to Him. And there are promises, personal promises to St. Peter, still waiting to be fulfilled. All that is promised here is to St. Peter *himself*, and not to his *successors*. The promise is *personal*, and not hereditary. This is the

vital point. Once get this clear, and then we can look the various interpretations of *πέτρα* in the face without trepidation or bias, and judge them impartially.

Three main interpretations are given.

πέτρα = St. Peter.

πέτρα = St. Peter's confession of Christ as God and Man.

πέτρα = Christ.

Probably our Lord's own action and gesture at the time were a clearer commentary than any that has ever been penned. As these are lost to us, all three views appear to me tenable, but the last recommends itself most.

I think few can read Bishop Wordsworth's exceedingly interesting note on the passage in his great commentary without being strongly drawn to it.* The words appear to me to bear this sense the best: "Thou art a Rock-man, and on this Rock" (Myself), "with which by thy very name thou art hereafter most intimately linked—on this will I build My Church. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.† Of its own gates I give you in charge the keys."

* Dean Alford's indignant candour appears to me to have run away with him in his strictures on that note, and overreached itself.

† *ταυτῇ τ. πέτρᾳ*. Cf. *τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον* (St. John ii. 19). Moreover, *πέτρα* = Hebrew *רֹקֶם*, commonly used as the name of God.

Peter is the key-bearer, like Eliakim (Isa. xxii. 22). The keys belong to our Lord (Rev. iii. 7).*

This office of key-bearer is one of great dignity, and when we consider how solemnly it was conferred at this time, it gives great point to a later warning of our Lord, recorded only by St. Mark, and uttered, as he informs us, in presence of Peter and James and John and Andrew (Mark xiii. 3): "For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house and gave authority to his servants" (St. Peter before had shown great interest in a similar parable—Luke xii. 35—41), "and to every man his

* There is an interesting incident connected with this passage in English Church history. When the power of the heathen king Penda was broken, and the Southern and Northern missionaries from Rome and from Iona met in conference at Whitby (664 A.D.) to settle their disputes, the famous Wilfrid of Ripon ended his argument for Roman usages by an appeal to this verse. The King, Oswy, appealed to Colman, the leader of the Scottish party—"Were these words spoken principally to St. Peter, and was he thus entrusted with the keys?" Colman was forced to assent. "And was the same power committed to your Columba or no?" He could only say, "It was not." Then said the King, with a quiet smile, "I say to you both that this is that doorkeeper whom I do not choose to gainsay; but, as far as I know and am able, I desire in all things to obey his rulings, lest haply when I come to the doors of the kingdom I may find none to unbar them if he is adverse to me who is proved to hold the keys."

Few royal decisions have had more momentous consequences. It greatly contributed to fix the character of our national religion for many centuries.

work, *and commanded the porter to watch.*" This was surely a special home-thrust at St. Peter. He seems afterwards at least to have felt it as such, and to have taken care that the record of it should be preserved to us. There can be no doubt that the keys were specially committed to St. Peter, and in the Acts we see how this promise was fulfilled. In the twelfth chapter we have a striking illustration, though only an illustration, of the promise about the gates of hell, or of Hades. In the first chapter we have St. Peter admitting a new Apostle. On the day of Pentecost he takes the lead in the first great conversion of those three thousand Jewish souls, and he himself tells us, "Ye know that a good while ago God made choice among us that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel and believe" (Acts xv. 7).

It only remains to trace the influence which in after-life his name Peter would seem to have had upon the Apostle himself. There is one remarkable passage in his life in which the surname as such was brought before him very prominently. I refer to the story of Cornelius and his conversion. St. Peter chanced to be lodging with one Simon a tanner, or was it not rather a special providence? Therefore the angel in vision said to Cornelius, "Send to Simon surnamed Peter."

Men came inquiring "whether Simon surnamed Peter were lodged there." Cornelius, telling him of the vision, repeats the words "Simon surnamed Peter." The Apostle himself (xi. 13), recounting the incident to those who questioned him, is careful to record the phrase "Simon surnamed Peter." In the vision he saw, the voice said to him, "Rise, *Peter*, kill and eat!" It is the first time we read of his being authoritatively addressed by that name of privilege since his fall.

All this would combine to carry back his thoughts to the day when our Lord bestowed the title Peter upon him, and help him to remember the words accompanying, "I will give thee the keys." Perhaps it was designed to help him in his perplexity, to strengthen him to overcome a lifelong, hereditary prejudice, to teach him more plainly to interpret the vision of the sheet that was so staggering to Jewish faith, and act his part as porter of the church.

There is another point to notice, namely the deep impression made on *St. Peter's* mind by the words of our Lord, "Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The *stone* which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given

to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. xxi. 42, 43).

St. Peter himself twice quotes this text with a deeply interesting personal application. In Acts iv. 6 and following, we read how he first encountered the Sanhedrim, and told them boldly of that very Jesus Whom they had crucified, "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other." Here Peter shows that he understood the first part of our Lord's commentary: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you." The old teachers are superseded by the new—the humble fishermen commissioned with a Gospel the rulers do not know. But again, and long years afterwards, St. Peter quotes the words in his first epistle: "To Whom coming, as unto a living *stone*, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also as lively *stones* are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious, and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe He is precious, but to them which be disobedient, the stone which the

builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them that stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light, which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God, which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Pet. ii. 4-10).

In this passage St. Peter applies the words, not merely to the neglect of the Jewish rulers, but to the acceptance of Christ by thousands of Gentile followers. As time went on, the words of Christ bore increasing fruit in his heart and in his mind; he learnt the meaning, not of the first part alone, but of the whole of the Saviour's commentary: "*The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*"

Is it not interesting to trace how the doctrine of Christ unfolded itself more and more under the teaching of an ever-enlarging experience, and through humble submission to the guidance of that Holy Spirit Who in each new perplexity brought back to his mind the words of the Master Himself?

CHAPTER III.

ST. PETER AND JUDAS.

“Have not I chosen you the twelve, and one of you is a devil?”—
JOHN vi. 70.

“Get thee behind Me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.”—MATT. xvi. 23.

THE teaching of our Lord was teaching for all time. Every word of those lips that has been recorded for us is full of Divine instruction for every age. This is most certainly true. Yet we do well to remember that these words of truth, of warning, and encouragement have always a special as well as a universal meaning. His words were called forth by His own immediate circumstances, adapted to His own especial audiences. What He said and what He forbore to say was always proportioned to the minds of those to whom He was speaking, and always tempered and toned to meet their needs and their capacities. Nay, we may go further than this. It is because the words of our Lord were so exactly suited to the characters and needs of those who heard Him *then* that

they are also so universally adapted to the characters and needs of people nowadays. Men are essentially one all the world over ; and so the little society in which our Saviour moved on earth becomes typical, and men can read their own hearts in studying the Gospel characters.

It is not simply that our Saviour had to bring down to us the truth of God, to explain to us a system of Divine government, to give us a treatise on the human character and on the attributes of God. He had not merely to bring all this down to us, but to bring it home to us by the infinite play of life upon life, soul upon soul, and character upon character. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." "I have many things to teach you, but ye cannot bear them now." Our Lord dealt with men, not in the abstract, but in the concrete, not in the mass alone, but one by one. He read their character and their thoughts ; His teaching was always coloured by what He knew of them.

This gives infinite interest to all His lessons, regarded as a study by those who themselves are called upon to teach. How to adapt the message to the man or, if you will, to the child, is always the difficulty. Some may corrupt the message, others ignore the man. But

what far more than human wisdom does it need to take exact account of both ! Our Saviour is the one perfect pattern of teaching in this respect, and if we studied His methods more carefully, how much we might improve our own !

Amidst the many duties that He had before Him in His brief walk upon earth, one, and not the least important, was the training up of a little band of followers to be His witnesses and carry on His work when He returned to heaven. Much of His teaching and many of His prayers were specially for them. To them He unbosomed the deeper secrets of His mission, the mysteries of His kingdom. They were a band of very varied characters, and each one no doubt required and received a separate and individual training, although the records are so brief that we can only trace it in the case of a very few.

The two verses with which I have headed this paper may teach us much, I think, of the way in which our Saviour adapted His teaching to different characters. He knew where to rebuke openly, and where to warn secretly. He met the frankness of St. Peter with a frankness of His own. He met the insincerity of Judas with a reserve of His own, and yet a reserve consistent with perfect faithfulness. Christ always

deals with us according as we deal with Him, yet He is always "the Truth."

The whole subject of the call and training of Judas is shrouded in deep mystery. Why should the Scripture have so preordained that Jesus should die by treachery? And why should our Lord knowingly summon a traitor among His little band? We cannot say. It may be that as the rebellion of Adam was the rebellion and treachery of a son against his Father, so the redemption of Adam's race could only be wrought out by means of a like treachery; only so could men fully see how thoroughly loathsome and hateful was the sin from which they must be redeemed. The fulness of redemption must bring to light the fulness of the wickedness for which atonement was made. In every outward qualification for apostleship Judas no doubt was on a par with the rest. None of the others appear to have suspected the canker in his heart; most likely he himself when he joined our Lord's company suspected it not. His offer of service was seemingly sincere, and had our Saviour rejected it, He would not have left him at heart a better man.

I will leave these deeper questions, and come to the plain, simple lessons to be learned from the way our Lord treated Judas when he was once enrolled amongst

the twelve. The point I would notice is this: St. Peter was honest indeed, but blundering both in opinion and action, always forward and often wrong. Again and again he is rebuked openly. If not at the time enlightened, he always takes it in good part. Judas in outward conduct was probably quite correct, yet his heart was not sound. He was not open and frank. He cherished a lurking greed for gold. There was a secret root of bitterness. The Saviour adapted His teaching to His man. He respected the privacy even of Judas' heart. He warned him again and again, but always secretly.

At his very call the Saviour gave a hint of dark possibilities when He uttered the dreadful words so fearfully verified in Judas' after-history, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt. x. 36). He left him not unwarned of the very means by which so terrible a thing might come to pass.

"Provide neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purses," is His first warning note. There are other passages, such as Matthew vi. 19—24, in which the thought of Judas may well have been present to our Saviour's mind, although He spoke to all.

When Christ replied to Peter's ardent assertion of undying loyalty, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou

hast the words of everlasting life," "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" the conscience of Judas may well have whispered, "Thou art the man." But he was not exposed, and would not expose himself. Yet to feel self-condemned was terrible. He was a thief, and had the bag. He went from bad to worse. He loved darkness rather than light, because his deeds were evil. How could he fail to hate the Light, living therewith continually? How could he fail to be reproved? The Light was also that Love which beareth, hopeth, believeth all things. That made the matter worse. He was the more reproved. To feel himself so trusted and yet to know himself so all-unworthy of trust! Wretched indeed he was, and faithfully warned! Hear Christ again. Judas was there when He spake the words recorded by St. Luke (xii. 15), "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." The parable of the rich fool was uttered before him, and pointed directly towards him. "Therefore I say unto you My disciples, Take no thought for your life. . . . Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Yes, there was room even now for Judas to repent.) "Sell that ye have and give

alms. Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth neither moth corrupteth, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Then follows the parable of the watchful servants, still read in our Ordination Service, and Peter and Judas are brought together again, for Judas is sullenly silent, but Peter, ever anxious to learn, speaks out, "Lord, speakest Thou this parable to us or even to all?" And in answer to that inquiry a still more searching warning is vouchsafed: "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the menservants and the maidens, and to eat and drink and to be drunken, the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him and at an hour when he is not aware, *and will cut him asunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.* And that servant which knew his lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes, for to

whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required, and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Remember that Judas was the steward of that small company. Remember that he was present then. Remember that St. Peter tells us of his fate, that he, falling headlong, burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out, and these words become pregnant with the weight of doubly solemn prophecy. They are a warning to all; they have a special application to one who listened.

Look again at Luke xiv. 26—35, especially the last three verses: "So likewise whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple. Salt is good; but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*"

Look again at Luke xvi. 10—14, words addressed by our Lord to His disciples, and after a parable concerning an unjust steward: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and he that is unjust in that which is least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true

riches? and if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who will give you that which is your own? No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Again was Judas warned when the rich young man was sent sorrowing away: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of God!" and Judas, amongst the rest, asked, "Who then can be saved?" And Jesus still held out to him, as to them, a door of hope: "With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

So far warning and sin had gone on side by side in secrecy. That this was the kindest and most charitable course is shown by what follows next. At Bethany Judas grumbled at Mary's prodigality. Our Lord in the gentlest, kindest manner reproved him for it before the rest; He could do nothing less, and even now He did nothing to lay bare the mean motive of Judas' words. Yet what was the result? At the first touch of rebuke the traitor was enraged, and from this time forward he sought opportunity to sell his Lord. The Saviour bore with him still. Even at that last supper He still bore with him, and, except in secret whisper to one who lay on His breast, did nothing to reveal his treachery to any but himself.

Not till he plainly declared himself in the garden did Jesus pronounce his shame : “ Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss ? ”

Peter was warned openly : “ Thou shalt deny Me thrice ; ” Judas secretly : “ That thou doest do quickly.” Judas sought opportunity ; Peter was suddenly tripped. And the end of their sin was in accordance with the beginning—the bitter remorse of Judas ; the bitter repentance of Peter : the one of them going to prison and death with his Lord ; the other, in utter solitude, cut off from the very companions of his wickedness and going to his own place.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CALL OF ST. PETER BY THE LAKE.

“And it came to pass that as the people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake ; but the fishermen were gone out of them and were washing their nets. And He entered into one of the ships which was Simon’s and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the people out of the ship. Now, when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto Him, Master we have toiled all the night and taken nothing, nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done they inclosed a great multitude of fishes, and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners which were in the other ship that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both the ships so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it he fell down at Jesus’ knees saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished and all that were with him at the draught of the fishes which they had taken. And so was also James and John the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not ; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed Him.”—LUKE v. 1-11.

WHY should a wonderful catch of fish make Peter think himself a very wicked man ? What special sin had been brought home to him ? We know not any.

He simply saw a grand instance of Christ's mastery over the natural world and he is filled at once with the deepest feeling of his own utter unworthiness : " Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." This is worth thinking about, whether we can altogether explain it or not ; I do not think I can.

No doubt any sudden undeserved benefit produces in any generous nature at least a momentary drawing back. " Oh this is too good of you ; " " You are too kind ; I cannot let you do it." All true gratitude is founded in confession of unworthiness. If any one simply takes all the good things of life and all the homage and favours of his fellow-men as a matter of right, he may say " Thank you " out of mere politeness, but he is really incapable of much true gratitude. So in all our church services we are taught to prelude thanksgiving with humble confession of sin. The two things are inextricably bound up together, they cannot be separated. Penitence must in its own nature be ever rising up into joy.* Thanksgiving must ever be founded

* For this phrase I am indebted to a sermon by the Bishop of Bedford, published in " Words of Good Cheer." One passage I am tempted to quote for its intrinsic interest.

" It has been pointed out that a deep and touching parable may be found in St. Paul's Cathedral, where the voice of holy praise is evermore going up in the constant and beautiful services of the choir. Underneath it is a crypt or hidden church in which many services are now

in humility. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," may be regarded as simply the first involuntary outbreak of Peter's gratitude.

This explanation, true in so far as it goes, is certainly entirely inadequate. Abasement so profound must have a deeper origin. It was not merely that St. Peter had received a great and undeserved benefit, but he was suddenly conscious of a tremendous gulf between himself and Christ. It is always most difficult to fully realise the twofold nature of our Lord—His real humanity, His real divinity. We can remember one, or we can remember the other; but while we dwell on His real manhood, we are ever in danger of forgetting His true divinity, and while we remember His true divinity, we are in danger of forgetting His perfect manhood.

To us, now Jesus is removed from our sight beyond the clouds of glory, and seated at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, perhaps the stronger temptation is to forget that He is really and truly one of ourselves,

held and many gatherings for instruction and devotion take place. The pavement of this crypt is made of mosaics which were manufactured by female prisoners, the superintendent and the very soul of the work being that truest of penitents, Constance Kent, the murderess of her little brother, who under the leading of God's Holy Spirit, when no suspicion rested on her, confessed her crime and gave herself up to justice. Thus is the house of praise paved with penitence."

bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh ; to the disciples, in the days of His lowly work upon earth, the stronger temptation must ever have been to forget that Jesus was really and truly God. Indeed it was some time before the apostles of Jesus thoroughly learnt this lesson at all. They owned Jesus as the Messiah, but without any very clear understanding of all that was implied by this admission. They could not have endured the fulness of the revelation. It would have overpowered them to feel and fully apprehend that they were in constant familiar and unembarrassed intercourse with Him Who was very God. Only now and again did the full power of Christ's deity flash forth upon them in moments of special intuition and special moral strain. And so, in spite of all their true loyalty, and all their genuine love, our Saviour passed through His life upon our earth, a lonely man, for He was never understood even by those who cared for Him the most. It will not, I think, be allowing any unbridled license to our imagination, if we suppose that St. Peter fancied himself to be conferring a favour on Jesus in taking Him on board his ship. Willing no doubt he was to grant such a favour to Him, but it was startling to find all in a moment the tables turned. Christ was the Giver, he the recipient.

St. Peter no doubt prided himself upon his skill in

his own special craft. He was willing to admit the excellence of Jesus as a carpenter. He knew Him for more than that, a wonderful teacher and very holy man : he was more than half convinced that He was indeed the very Messiah of God ; but one thing he was not prepared for. He did not think that Jesus knew more of fishing than he himself. It was not without a certain amount of protest that he accepted our Saviour's orders at all in this respect, and he was filled with most unfeigned astonishment at the result. He was prepared for many wonderful things ; but that our Lord should show Himself so far his own superior in this his own especial line of life—this was the one thing for which St. Peter was the most unprepared, the one thing that would take him most utterly aback. He had toiled all the night and taken nothing. Christ in a moment supplied this wonderful draught. Yet he knew all about fishing, and Jesus had never had any experience therein. What could it be ? Jesus had surely succeeded because of His wonderful holiness, and I have failed, thought St. Peter, because of my grievous sin. No man could do such miracles except God were with him, and no man, so skilful as I, would have failed so utterly if God were not grieved with him. I have failed in my own calling, and is not my very failure a proof of my sin ?

Under the Old Testament dispensation when men had little light upon the world beyond the grave, outward prosperity and adversity was regarded more firmly than now as a test of the favour or the displeasure of God. And so such thoughts would be more likely to occur to him.

When Jesus entered that boat, St. Peter may well have thought their friendship was on nearly equal terms. Christ, it is true, was the Master, and he the follower, but a follower who could confer the most important benefits, and whose support was most useful, if not most necessary.

Suddenly this little difference widens out to a great impassable gulf, wider than any distinction between man and his fellow-man. An intuition reveals to him the yawning chasm that lies between man and God. What wonder that he cries, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"! His very acts of goodness had something in them of sin, his very hospitality had something in it of pride, his very obedience something of wilfulness, and yet both the one and the other had been so richly, so fully, so undeservedly repaid. Well may he cry "Depart!" The words are the outpouring of simple manliness and generosity of spirit, for had St. Peter been a selfish man he would have wished our

Lord to stay with him for ever, and give him draughts of fishes every day. Golden visions of rapid profits and an easy retirement would have risen before his eyes ; he would have been more occupied in thinking about the value of the fish than the greatness of the miracle. His prayer was not a prayer of perfect knowledge, but it was a true and manly utterance of pure unselfishness and deep humility.

This is not the only instance we have in the Bible of God's power in the realm of Nature producing contrition of heart. The case of Job is very similar. He, like St. Peter, was a man of strong and true and independent character. How deeply and bitterly he suffered we all know. Stroke after stroke bereft him with awful suddenness of all his property, and all his household, and all his family. A cruel revolting leprosy preyed on his very flesh. His wife herself was spared to him only that she might become the devil's ally and accomplice in his terrific assault. She tempted him more sorely than Adam was tempted by Eve : "Curse God and die." All this was bitter enough, but the fiendish malignity of Satan contrived to squeeze into his cup of sorrow one drop more bitter still. Nothing was left him but his character and his good name, and now the enemy assails him even in that, the tenderest,

the sorest point. See him seated half-naked on the dung-hill scraping himself with that broken piece of potsherd ! His friends collect around to comfort him. How do they set about it ? They simply try to persuade him : " You are a very wicked man, or God would never have punished you like this."

They had a religious theory to maintain. " God in this world rewards good men, and punishes wicked men ; therefore, when any man is singularly punished the natural inference is that he is a singularly wicked man. To think that God would ever act unfairly is little short of blasphemy." Such a theory is not unknown even now : it is symmetrical and attractive ; it seems to be honouring God ; it really does account for a number of facts. It has enough of truth in it to make it very plausible. In Job's days it would carry even greater weight. Comparatively little was known about the realm beyond the grave : and the more dim was the expectation of a great restitution of all things in the world to come, the more keenly and eagerly did men expect to see justice done plainly and manifestly in this present life. More likely than not Job fully shared his friends' religious theory. That only made their words the harder to bear. They were miserable comforters, but not because they were consciously

unfair or unkind to him: what gave the sting to their words was their undoubted sincerity. His friends really thought themselves true, and really thought him bad. And Job had sufficient imagination to feel that were he in their place, he probably would think the same. He agrees with their theory. He has no other to put instead of it; and yet he feels himself wronged. Job knew that he had not been, at least as they meant it, a very wicked man. Why should he say that he had? He appeals boldly, passionately to God the supreme Judge of all. Is it not grand amidst that pressure of misery and torture of mind and soul to see how firm he remains? "Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness will I hold fast. I will not let it go. My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live."

The cruel assaults of his friends drive him to justify himself in terms which seem to them to savour of presumption and pride and almost blasphemy. He tells God his perplexities in the frankest way, and appeals to him almost as it were upon equal terms. And how does God humble him? He does not, like these miserable friends, seek to bring home to him some special fault. He simply overwhelms him by instance after instance of His almighty power, His

marvellous creative wisdom and skill. God does not condescend to justify Himself and His own fairness from Job's occasional fevered suspicions and doubts. He could not do it without unveiling the design of Satan, and so destroying the value of the test. Still less does He condescend to any unworthy retort, accusing Job of wickedness. He simply shows the patriarch a glimpse of the infinite gulf and chasm between himself and God. That was enough, and Job exclaimed at once, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Perhaps I have sufficiently shown that the feeling of St. Peter, like that of Job, was natural. It was the inevitable result of the sudden revelation of an awful distance and difference between himself and Christ, at the very time when he was in the closest relations of intimacy, in some ways, to his own thinking, even of superiority. For is not the captain of the vessel above the passenger? Before we go on to inquire how far the feeling was right, it may be worth while to pause for awhile to consider how far the wonders of God in creation are still a call to repent.

True! we have no miracles nowadays; but if St.

Peter was humbled by a special miracle, it was not so with Job. The argument that brought him low was the merest recital of God's most marvellous and yet most ordinary works. And certainly our own age with its strong scientific bent has opened out to us in wonderful ways the marvel of what is ordinary. We have fewer miracles, perhaps not any, but we have great compensation in finding most ordinary things miraculous in the strictest sense of the word, worthy of wonder, worthy to be admired. Think how astronomy has opened out the heavens, geology the earth! What is the moral effect of all these grand discoveries? Knowledge, we know, puffeth up. Is that the end of them all? To make us a little more self-conceited and better pleased with ourselves. Not in the noblest and not in the best of men, for surely the progress of true science is also the progress of true humility. The psalmist David said, "When I consider Thy heavens the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars Thou hast created, what is man that thou visitest him and the son of man that thou so regardest him?" Many have been considering the heavens since David's time. What were to him mere specks of light in the dark firmament we know to be worlds far larger than our own. And yet the lesson is still the same, only more

strongly enforced. Amidst the vastness of creation what a mere nothing is man ! Nearly three thousand years after David's days Sir Isaac Newton, who has done more perhaps than any one other to enlarge our conceptions of the vastness of the universe of which we form a part, expressed the very same thought only in different words. With all the enormous stores of knowledge he possessed he said he felt but as an infant picking up pebbles beside the ocean of Eternal Truth.

When we consider the mere vastness of creation, we are made conscious of our own littleness ; but when we go on to remember that all this beauty and glory is ordered by Infinite Wisdom and Love to wait upon us and do us service, and minister to both our bodies and minds, we are made conscious of something more than littleness. We feel our baseness, ingratitude, and sin. What have we done to deserve such blessings, such wonders as these ?

The beauty and order of Nature becomes a rebuke to the sad disorders of our own sin-stained hearts. Is it not sad to stand the one guilty being amidst a world of beauty filled to overflowing with wonders unexplored ? The sight of some glorious landscape

Where every prospect pleases
And only man is vile ;

or the fresh apprehension of the magnificent order of natural law, bringing our littleness face to face with the infinity of the beneficent Creator, these things are still amongst God's calls to penitence. We still have a kind of instinctive shrinking back from so much glory and joy.

Men have been moved to tears, and are continually awed into silence by the mere beauty of God's outward world. In this feeling of solemn awe, of which all but the hardest natures have surely at some time been in some measure conscious, do we not even now catch the faint echo of Peter's astonished cry, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" ?

The prayer was certainly natural, but then the further question arises, Was it right ? Could it be right to ask the Lord to depart ? Are we to compare St. Peter here with John the Baptist, who said of our Lord, "After me cometh One Who is preferred before me, the latchet of Whose shoe I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose" ? And with the centurion who said, "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof, but speak the word only and my servant shall be healed" ? If so, he too was a striking example of faith. Or must we rather compare him with those foolish Gadarenes who, after seeing

Christ's work of power on the poor demoniac, and the maddened rush of the swine into the troubled sea, were filled with fear and came and besought Jesus that He would depart out of their coasts? If so, he too was a striking example of unbelief. The Bible does not leave us in doubt upon this point. The words of our Saviour settle it. He answered the centurion, and praised his faith. He answered the Gadarenes, and left them to themselves. But with St. Peter he dealt quite differently, with half rebuke and half encouragement. He did not hear his prayer, and so it could not have been altogether right. And yet he made it the occasion of a very special commission and call, a fresh starting point in a life of devoted loyal service, and so it could not have been altogether wrong.

Just as Elijah prayed to God to take away his life, for, said he, "I am not better than my fathers," and God answered him long afterwards by taking him up alive in a chariot of fire without his ever tasting of death; so here St. Peter asked Jesus to depart, and Jesus only answered him by binding him in ever closer bonds to Himself. It is the special privilege of God's own children to have their foolish well-meaning prayers answered from time to time in this strange way.

The fact is that St. Peter had grasped a great truth with all the sudden force of an inspiration. He felt as he had never felt before the infinite distance between himself and Christ. And so far he was right and worthy of all praise. The result seemed to follow as an unanswerable conclusion of logic, or rather a moral necessity too clear to wait to be reasoned about at all. "If Christ is so infinitely holier than I, I can be no fit companion for such a Christ. I know my own place far too well to think of any such thing." We cannot blame St. Peter for arguing thus. There is an appearance of true humility, nay more, a deep reality of uninstructed humbleness that goes at once to our hearts and calls forth all our sympathy. Let us take a poor illustration from ordinary life. Two men have been brought up from boyhood together and shared the same humble fare. Suddenly it is discovered that one is heir to a great property. Henceforth his interests and pursuits must lie apart from his friend's. On such a discovery, should we blame the poor man for drawing off, for telling his friend, "Our paths must henceforth diverge. I never can forget our friendship, but henceforth you can never be to me and I can never be to you, all that we were in the past"? Such conduct would surely be simple, manly, and natural.

Regarding our Saviour simply as man, the conduct of Peter exactly corresponds to it. He found in a moment that he had been associating with Jesus under a false pretence, at least with a very inadequate sense of their relative positions towards one another. He wishes to withdraw from the false position at once. He sees no other way than breaking off the intercourse. No selfish thought of his own abiding affection for Christ shall interfere with the plain and paramount duty of taking his own proper place.

And yet had he seen it aright—the very greatness of the difference between them, the very blackness of his own sinfulness, the very beauty of Christ's spotless holiness, forbade the separation for which he vainly sued. To return to our former illustration. So long as the poor man was able honestly to pay his way, to earn his own livelihood, and bring up his own family respectably, so long surely we should honour him for not taking advantage of that other's wealth, not thrusting himself forward into a position in society for which by his training and antecedents he was unfit. But suppose some great misfortune fell upon him. Suppose, for instance, his house was burnt over his head, his tools and his savings perished in the flames, and he himself only escaped with injuries that would

unfit him for work for months to come. Plainly now the man must be helped or starve. He has no power now to help himself. His former mate steps in, places a house at his disposal, engages to pay for his children's schooling and for the nursing and doctoring of his own injuries. He does it all, not grudgingly or stintingly, but with a gracious and generous delicacy of feeling that places the offer in the most attractive way. Is not the case now somewhat altered? Should we any longer admire the independence of the cripple if he refused the help? Should we not rather blame him for obstinacy and pity him for his unreasoning and misplaced pride? The meaning of the parable is plain enough. Independence up to a certain point is all very well, beyond that point it breaks down utterly, and we can never be independent of God. The sinner cannot help himself apart from Christ.

Though Peter asked our Lord to go, there was a deep undercurrent of feeling all the time. "I could not do without Thee." His very act declared it, he clasped our Saviour's knees. Our Saviour answered not so much the words as the inmost thoughts of the man. "Fear not! from henceforth thou shalt catch men!" He did not palliate his sinfulness, He did not allow him to think himself one whit more good than he was,

our Saviour with all His gentleness will never flatter us. He cannot, because He is the Truth. But He does better than that. He gives him absolution. He gives him peace. "Fear not." "The Lord also hath put away thy sins." And from the depth of his humility He opens out to him a new and grand career,—“From henceforth thou shalt catch men.” No longer shalt thou be a disappointed fisherman, but a successful apostle. Instead of departing thyself, thy whole future destiny is to attract other men in all the fulness of their living powers and draw them to My feet.*

The prayer of St. Peter was right in its humility. But let us copy his action and not his words. He flung himself at Jesus' feet; and so may we, and we shall rise the stronger and the better men. We need not, with our fuller knowledge, pray his prayer. Rather the very sense of our own complete helplessness, and the tremendous distance between the Lord and us, should lead us to cast ourselves more unreservedly upon His ready help, crying, “I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.” “Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.” “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

* ἀνθρώπους ἐση ζωγρῶν.

CHAPTER V.

THE COIN IN THE FISH'S MOUTH.

“ And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute? He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute? of their own children or of strangers? Peter said unto Him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea and cast an hook, and take thou the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take and give unto them for Me and thee.”—MATT. xvii. 24-27.

THIS incident is far more full of instruction than would appear at first sight to most of those who read it. Before we can be in a proper position to fully understand the teaching of the miracle, we need a clearer conception of two things: first, the nature of the tribute; and, secondly, the motives of those who asked St. Peter whether his Master would pay.

This tribute was not a civil but an ecclesiastical tax. It was paid not to the Roman rulers, but to the temple treasury. It went not to maintain the Roman armies

and the Roman roads, to provide wealth for the Roman publicans and the provincial governor, and luxuries for the Imperial Cæsar upon the throne of the world. This tribute was set apart for holier purposes. It went to provide the daily sacrifices, the wood for the offerings, the sacred incense, and all the current expenses of the temple services.

This tribute was a sort of annual voluntary church rate, of small fixed definite amount. The Revised Version rightly renders it :—"Those that received the half-shekel (Greek, *Didrachma*, margin) came to Peter." It was a tribute of 1s. 3d., levied from every pious and patriotic Jew about the Passover season, for the maintenance of his national religion and worship. I said it was voluntary; but this is only partially true. We are all familiar with the tyranny of social custom in such cases. The payment was so far voluntary, that it could not be enforced in the Roman courts; but whilst to refuse to pay taxes to the Roman emperor would make a man something of a hero and martyr and very popular, to refuse payment of this temple tribute would make a man a kind of social out-cast among his own people, and prove a sort of practical excommunication.

The Pharisees and Sadducees had had a great dispute

about the collection of this tribute. The Sadducees who were few and rich, and would gain influence thereby, contended that the temple services should be kept up by entirely voluntary gifts. The Pharisees, many and poor, held out for the regular and universal rate. The dispute went on for eight days, we are told, and the Pharisees, the dominant religious party, remained victorious.

It will be interesting to ascertain not merely the character of this tax, but also to trace its history, if we would rightly and duly understand the difficulty in which St. Peter unwittingly placed his Lord and the wisdom and dignity with which our Saviour escaped the trap that was laid for His feet.

This tribute was of very ancient origin, twice as old as that vast empire, which now overshadowed the earth. We read of it first in Exodus xxx. 11—16:—
“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them when thou numberest them. This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty

gerahs :) a half shekel shall be the offering of the Lord. Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the Lord. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls. And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation ; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls."

The money was paid distinctly as an acknowledgment of the ransom of lives from Egypt. Thus the tribute was appropriately collected afterwards in connection with the great Passover feast. It was to be alike for all, rich and poor, to teach the great lesson that the soul of the rich man and the soul of the poor man are both alike, equally precious in the eyes of Him Who is the Maker of them both, and it was to be devoted to the service of the tabernacle.

What use was made of it there ? We are told in Exodus xxxviii. 25—28 :—The bulk of it was cast into a hundred silver sockets weighing a talent a-piece, which formed the foundation of the boards of the tabernacle. The remainder became the topmost orna-

ments of the pillars of the court. Thus all the Jewish worship in the wilderness was founded upon the ransom of souls. Five tons of silver, equal in value to £37,000, was hidden away among the dust and sand each time the tabernacle was set up. It was the ransom money of souls, and in it each Israelite, whatever his social position, had equal interest.

All this, of course, is typical. For us, too, all worship is founded upon the ransom of souls. For us our Saviour has laid His honour in the dust, and shed His life blood on the ground ; and we were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with His precious blood.

After the sojourn in the wilderness, the tax falls out of sight until the time of Joab ; and we pass at once from the founding of the tabernacle to the founding of the temple.

The tribute was to be collected when the people were numbered. Joab most likely objected to number the people when Satan stirred up David to do so, not because he was a more religious man than David, but because taking the census would also involve the payment of the half-shekel, and he would appear in the light of a tax-gatherer. The people were poor at this time, and the payment of the half-shekel would be a

serious tax. The result goes far to suggest that as a matter of fact the tribute was not paid although the people were numbered. The tribute was expressly ordained, "that there be no plague amongst them when thou numberest them." As this census was promptly followed by a desolating plague, it is most natural to suppose that the tribute had not been paid.

The plague was arrested by David's own offering upon the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. That became the foundation of the later temple. So once more the worship of Israel was founded upon a great redemption from death. There is only one more mention of this tribute in the Old Testament, unless, as is by no means clear, 2 Chron. xxiv. 6, 9, refer to the same tax. On the return from captivity it was converted into an annual charge. "Also we made ordinances to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of God" (Neh. x. 32). It would seem that in the time of our Lord, when the people were better able to pay more, the sum of half a shekel was yet again reverted to.

The tribute was continued till the fall of Jerusalem, and it was one of the bitterest drops in the Jews' cup of suffering that on his conquest of the city, Vespasian sequestered the money for the support

of the temple of Jupiter, on the Capitoline hill at Rome.*

So much for the tax, now for the motives of those who asked St. Peter. They were probably the emissaries of the Pharisees, for it was they who insisted so strongly upon the duty of universal payment. If so, they were not friendly to our Lord. If they did not actually design the question to entrap Him (and considering their conduct on other occasions, it would hardly be uncharitable to suppose that this was in their thoughts—for it would only be on a piece with what they often did at other times), yet they would take advantage of it afterwards. It was a thing so easy to misrepresent.

The Saviour, we see, was placed in an awkward dilemma by this demand. If He complied, where were

* For this account of the history of the tribute money, I am mainly indebted to a sermon by the Rev. C. H. Waller, published in his very interesting volume, "Silver Sockets and other Shadows of Redemption." I would strongly advise all who are able to do so, to purchase the book for themselves, as it is full of fresh light upon the teachings of Scripture. The annual tax is still, I am told by a Jewish friend, levied in the synagogue, though in an altered form. The collector carries round three half-shekels or the equivalent national coin, and places them in the hands of each worshipper; who raises them on high to claim them for his own, and solemnly returns them together with a few half-pence to the collector, having in this facile way, obeyed the law, saved his pocket, and salved his conscience as well.

His claims? The money was "ransom for souls," and Jesus so far from pleading guilty to the charge of any sin, strongly asserted His own entire innocence—"Which of you," says He, "convicteth Me of sin?" If He paid, could they not turn on Him at once and say, "Why, then did you pay the ransom of souls?" Again our Lord had asserted in hearing of the Pharisees, "Behold, One greater than the temple is here." If Christ was greater than the temple, the temple tribute could not be binding on Him. Or yet again, the Pharisees understood, and rightly understood, our Saviour to claim that He was equal with God. I and My Father are one. If so, the temple offering was due not from our Lord, but to Him. By paying it He waived His claims, He gave a handle to them by which to disprove His deity.

On the other hand, if he refused, where was His piety? How many earnest, good, and religious Jews He would shock. What cavils might be raised against His patriotism, His religion, His very morality. How might His enemies tauntingly say, He will pay to the Cæsar the taxes He knows the law can enforce, but when it is merely an obligation of honour, behold Him drawing back. What a fund of bitter sarcastic charges lay open to the inventive malice of His watchful foes.

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If He paid, they had an incontrovertible charge against Him as God. If He refused to pay, they had an incontrovertible charge against Him as man. What possible exit or escape could there be from such a peril as this? It was no little sign of wisdom to see the peril at all, it was a far greater sign to find the way of escape.

The position was one hard enough in itself, but the way in which the question was brought to our Lord made it a harder one still.

At Capernaum we imagine He was as a rule the guest of St. Peter in that house where He had raised his mother-in-law from the great fever at the commencement of His ministry. This will sufficiently account for the collectors coming direct to Peter and not to Christ. The apostle, with his usual eager impulsiveness, answers at once, "Of course He pays, my Master would never neglect the duty of every pious Jew." This honest, hasty zeal of St. Peter in two ways increased the difficulties of our Lord. If he refused to pay, St. Peter would incur the ignominy of harbouring an excommunicated man, and the Pharisees could taunt our Lord with doing a mean deed, the very suggestion of which was scouted and scorned by His own followers. Our Saviour, at least, could not support His own conduct without putting His leading

follower in the wrong, for even if He succeeded in justifying Himself for not paying, He must thereby condemn St. Peter for saying He would pay. It was a very awkward predicament, a very dangerous trap.

See the consummate wisdom with which our Saviour meets the case. First of all He deals with St. Peter. He treats him with an abrupt decisiveness peculiarly adapted to his character. He startles him on his entrance by a question, the drift of which St. Peter does not see, the second question of the kind Peter had heard that day. He answers it as readily, as unsuspectingly as the question of the collectors. The kings of the earth ask tribute from strangers alone. And then the Lord shows him the meaning of this, "Then are the children free!" First by His knowledge of Peter's thoughts and words outside the house He recalls the apostle's mind to the thought that He was more than man, Son of the Living God. And then He shows the apostle at once that he has made a mistake. What a rush of shamed confusion must have betrayed itself in Peter's face! But he is not left a moment to argue out the consequence of his rash word—the impulsive man is no sooner shown his fault than he is supplied, through his own fisherman's craft, with a ready means of escaping the perplexity.

“Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook and take up the fish that first cometh up, and when thou hast opened his mouth thou shalt find a piece of money (R. V., a shekel) that take and give unto them for Me and thee.”

The payment avoided any offence. The manner of that payment avoided any cavil. There is a wonderful wisdom about the whole transaction, the more we think of it the more we are amazed. Could they accuse Him as man? could they accuse Him as God? could they bring any shame upon His followers? He met them everywhere at once with perfect ease and perfect skill. I will not dwell on the wonderful moral lessons of this incident. I would rather lead my readers to meditate upon them for themselves.*

But besides its moral aspect the miracle has in it somewhat almost of a prophetic character. A straw will suffice to show us which way the wind is blowing. A very little thing will often reveal the bent and purpose of a life: and so this seemingly trifling incident in which 2s. 6d. which could not be rightly claimed from him was paid by Jesus for Peter and Himself,

* There is an excellent sermon in Dean Howson's "Meditations on the Miracles of Christ," from which I have borrowed much, and to which I would gladly refer those who are anxious for more.

was no unfitting prelude to that far greater act of self-repression and self-sacrifice—when He was numbered with the transgressors, and shed His own life-blood, a ransom for us and for many for the remission of sins. Truly, the children are free. Yet Christ has taught us a yet higher law. Though He were a Son yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered, and being made perfect became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.

On only one other point would I like to say a few words.

Men have accused this miracle of being selfish and being trivial, a mere wonder wrought for mere wonder's sake, or a selfish expedient by which our Saviour provided for a very trivial claim.

With regard to selfishness. We are not to suppose that our Saviour rescued Himself from the difficulty in this way, because He had no money to pay in any other. Our Lord and His disciples, it is true, were poor, but then this payment was a very little one.*

* The half-shekel corresponds exactly to the two pence in the parable of the good Samaritan : and would be the equivalent of the two days' wages for a labourer. It has been pointed out to me by the friend whose help I have acknowledged earlier in this paper, that a deep spiritual meaning may be attached to this.

The good Samaritan before leaving the wounded traveller paid the

There is nothing to lead us to think that the bag of Judas did not contain more than enough to satisfy the claim. So far from being selfish the Saviour wrought the wonder to save His apostle from shame.

Nor again can the wonder be proved any mere freak of omnipotence, the moral purpose of this miracle is most grand. It attests the very central doctrine of the Christian verity; Christ come in the flesh: its moral teachings are most profound, and we may well apply to it the words of the great Augustine, *Deus magnus in magnis, maximus in minimis*. The seeming littleness is that wherein the real greatness consists. We see the Manhood and Godhead of Jesus here most perfectly combined. God's first command to man was this, "Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea." As perfect man the Saviour completely fulfilled that primal command. "The Lord," we are told again in the Old Testament, "prepared a great whale to swallow up Jonah." The Lord prepared a worm to eat the root of Jonah's gourd. If it be not thought

price of the ransom of the soul. Whatever more is needed shall be supplied on his return. Thus we have pardon first; reception into the universal Church (the *πανδοχείον*) through Christ, and afterwards eye hath not seen nor ear heard the things prepared. This only we know, "The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly."

beneath the dignity of God in the Old Testament to prepare the great fish and the little worm, why should it be beneath the dignity of Jesus in the New Testament to prepare the little fish for Peter's need? Does it diminish our sense of the greatness of God when we read that "not one sparrow falls to the ground without your Father which is in heaven"? Why should it then diminish our sense of the greatness of Jesus, that not one little fish moved in the waters of the lake, unfollowed by His eye, unknown to His perfect wisdom, and uncontrolled by His infinite power? This care for the individual amidst the mass is surely the greatest proof of Almighty wisdom and power that we could possibly ask.

This marvellous knowledge of Jesus about each little fish in that great lake is no unfitting introduction to what is told us in the next chapter about His marvellous love for each little child of His flock, His utter unwillingness to give them any offence. It helps us to believe in the grand assurance. It is not a thing willed before of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PREPARATION OF THE PASSOVER.

“For Thou, who knowest Lord how soon
Our weak heart clings,
Hast given us joys tender and true,
Yet all with wings,
So that we see, gleaming on high,
Diviner things.”

PROCTER.

ALL attentive readers of the Scripture narrative must have noticed that there is one large and important section of St. Peter's life in which he is joined in closest union with his great brother apostle St. John. This intimate association of the two friends apart from the rest, sprang from a wise appointment of Christ Himself. He it was that first knit those bands that remained so enduring and strong. No links are more strong than those of fellowship in common work, in days of special trial and distress : and on the last day of His life our Lord joined together Peter and John in the important work of making ready the

Feast.* They went together to the city to find the upper room : they must have gone together to the temple to sacrifice the Paschal lamb, returned to make all final preparations, and then most likely they went forth together again to meet the Lord and the ten other apostles coming over the Mount of Olives from the retreat at Bethany, and to conduct them to the place prepared. All this gave time and occasion for much close intercourse at a season of special excitement, emotion, and spiritual strain, when the hearts of the two would be opened out to one another with a peculiar frankness and tenderness of love. The traces of wise forethought on the part of Christ remain abundantly discernible in the succeeding record. At the Last Supper itself St. Peter beckons to St. John to ask a question of the Lord. It was John who went forth and

* One plain reason for the instructions given them by Jesus is often overlooked. It was not merely to test their faith, and give them a deeper insight into the knowledge of Christ, but for the practical object of not letting the traitor know the place of the feast until the supper began. That little hour of respite our Lord would secure from all intrusion of armed bands from the Sanhedrim. It may very likely have been a distinct disappointment to Judas who as the steward of that small company would have expected the task to fall to him and bring the opportunity of which he was in search. This seeming slight may also have added to the bitterness of the contention at the opening of the supper, when Judas would seem to have asserted his dignity and to have obtained a place nearest the Lord.

brought in Peter to the judgment hall. They alone of the disciples witnessed together the foul indignities heaped on the Saviour of the world; and the link was so strengthened between them that in his shame and the bitterness of spirit that followed his timorous denial Peter kept himself aloof from the remaining apostles and sought no other comforter than John. And thus he who had come forth from that fiery ordeal least blameworthy, least scathed, had for his great reward the double task committed to him of comforting the weeping mother of his Lord, and seeking to comfort also the wayward and weeping apostle who having claimed to be first now found himself the lowest and the last. Together they ran to the tomb, together they returned again, St. John believing, St. Peter wondering, at what had come to pass. The recorded services of the disciple whom Jesus loved, to him who was to be the leader of the band, do not cease here. Again on the lake of Tiberias, St. John points out to Peter the risen Lord, and thus, as by summoning him into the judgment hall of Caiaphas, he had unconsciously prepared the occasion of his fall, so now he prepares the way for his recommission and restoration to his forfeited position among the other twelve. What wonder that Peter repaid such tender friendship with

earnest solicitude and devoted love and ardent personal attachment? With what eagerness does he inquire, "Lord, what shall this man do?"* Almost as much as to say, "Are not Thy chiefest honours in store for him?" When we remember how indignant Peter together with the rest had been at the request of James and John for special honours in the kingdom of Christ, this is of special interest. So also we find that though St. Peter is the chief actor, as became both his character and his commission, St. John is closely joined with him in all the early records of the Church; in the miracle at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, in the subsequent arrest and testimony before the Sanhedrim, and in the mission to Samaria where John had once desired to call down fire to destroy, but now called down the fire of the Holy Ghost, the Lord and the Giver of life.

* When we compare the expressions *οὗτος δὲ τί* ; and *τί πρὸς σε* ; *σὺ ἀκολουθεῖ μοι*. They would seem almost to indicate a clinging dependence of Peter upon the apostle of love, whose vision through those days of darkness and doubt, had been so bright and clear, whose sympathy had been so comforting and strong. Even the forward Peter—the thought of his fall before him—shrinks from responsibility, is willing to take shelter behind his brother apostle, instead of drawing his whole inspiration directly from the Lord, instead of stepping forth at once into the place of leadership assigned to him alike by his own character and by the call and providence of God.

Briefly to sum up the facts. Before the Last Supper, James and John are joined closely together, after it Peter and John are found in closest fellowship. Our Lord Himself united them in intimate companionship upon that very day.

One thought occurs to us. How loving and kind it was of Jesus before He left the twelve to bind these knots of special love and friendship so firmly and so well ; to bring together so closely these two so different in character, and yet so admirably fitted to help each other's needs ! It reminds us that one great work of Him Whose name is Love, is not merely to draw all hearts to Himself, but also to knit them in closer and closer bands of love to one another. As Professor Godet most beautifully says, "The love of God is great enough to make Him wish not to love or to be loved alone. He values love, which is the very essence of His being, too highly not to labour by every means to multiply it between all the beings He has created, as well as between Himself and them." Something surely of this special delight of God and of Christ, the image of God, is expressed in those verses of the prophet Malachi : "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another : and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him

for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not." The man who is able to help his brother in a time of darkness and spiritual distress,—that man is in the eyes of God a special jewel, those words shall never be forgotten, that service shall never be left out of account. And such a man was John, and such a work he did in Peter's case.

But there is another thought in connection with this work of Peter and John in preparing the Passover which many, even attentive Bible students, may very possibly have overlooked. It is surprising when we look closely into it, to see how many of the beautiful and striking sayings of our Lord are directly called forth and elicited by either the acts or the questions of the Apostle Peter. In some cases the connection is on the surface. We cannot dissociate the saying or the reply of Jesus from the act or the question of Peter which occasioned it. In others, sometimes through the artificial divisions of chapters in the English Bible,

sometimes through the real subtlety of the links of thought, the connection is not so plain.

All are familiar with the parable of the unmerciful servant, but we do not always remember that we owe it to Peter's question, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" All are familiar with the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, but few, I think, remember its very direct connection with Peter's question, "Lo! we have left all and followed Thee, what shall we have therefore?" This question of Peter is the very key to the interpretation of the parable, the object of which is to contrast a service of mere bargain for reward with the far nobler service of loyal unquestioning trust. Yet because the question is in the nineteenth chapter of St. Matthew, the story in the twentieth, most readers entirely lose sight of this conspicuous link in the reasoning, and miss the very motive of the Saviour's words. The loss in this case is more deplorable, because through this simple neglect not merely the full meaning of the Lord's own words is obscured, but a false, perverted meaning is substituted in its place.

A story meant to teach a spirit of trust instead of a spirit of mere bargaining in serving God, is distorted as if the main lesson were rather to show that a man

who repents and turns at the eleventh hour may be as well off, and as fully rewarded as one who has spent his life, and strength, and toil in work and labour for the Lord, and when men argue thus, they are apt to forget that the labourers called in at the eleventh hour had not received a summons at the ninth or any time before. That God can restore the years that the cankerworm and palmerworm hath eaten; that He can reward a short period of utterly devoted service crowning a life of wasted opportunity, according to His own royal bounty, and not according to the measure of time, I do not doubt, and I should be most sorry to deny it;* but to argue from this parable, either that all rewards in heaven shall be equal, or that delay in accepting the call of Christ is anything short of maddest gambling with eternal life, is not merely to miss the true teaching of Jesus, but to pervert it utterly.

But to return to the main question, the connection of Peter with many sayings of our Lord. Perhaps the

* See Keble's beautiful lines for the first Sunday after Christmas :—

“Time's waters will not ebb nor stay,
Power cannot change them, but Love may ;
What cannot be, Love counts it done ;
Deep in the heart her searching view
Can read where faith is fixed and true,
Through shades of setting life can see Heaven's work begun.”

more familiar the saying, the less likely is this connection to be observed. We think of the words apart by themselves, and we forget the occasion which led up to them. I am sure that this is the case in the example which I shall now adduce, and which was in my mind from the beginning of this paper.

The comfortable words of Jesus (St. John xiv.-xvi.) are constantly read by themselves. They are some of the most familiar in the New Testament. Most children, piously brought up, have learnt some portion of them, at least, by heart from their very infancy. We naturally turn to them to read beside the beds of the sick and the dying, and in the homes of the bereaved. No passage is more constantly turned to by us in seeking to prepare our hearts for the Holy Sacrament of Christ's body and blood. And rightly so, for were they not words uttered at the very feast? But all this constant use rather blinds perhaps than opens our eyes to the historical connection of the words. We begin with the fourteenth chapter. We seek a fountain of spiritual hope and joy and life. We forget the thirteenth chapter that precedes; and full as the opening words of John xiv. are in themselves of comfort and strength, we miss some portion of the beauty, the pathos, and the tenderness. However

glorious the words of Jesus are, they always gain an added glory from time and circumstance and place. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." In this case we are so eagerly bent upon the apples of gold, that we are in danger of forgetting how admirably they are framed, with what discretion, with what consummate art—art that can only spring from truest beauty of soul. Then let us take the well-known words and follow them out in that connection which we too often forget.

"Let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also."

There is something peculiarly touching in the contrast of place when we remember where these words were first uttered, words which, as Dr. Westcott beautifully says, first opened heaven to faith. It was in the poor borrowed upper chamber, prepared by the eager zeal of Peter and John, that the secrets of the eternal mansions of the Father's home were first displayed. Our Lord was royal, most royal in His lowliest estate. He came to His own ; His own

received Him not: to Bethlehem, the town of David's birth; there was no room in the inn: to Jerusalem, the city of the great King; there surely He will find Himself a palace, but no—He had not where to lay His head. He wished to keep the feast, one last feast of enjoyment, with His chosen few. He had not where to go. For those brief hours of passing respite and refreshment He had to use a borrowed room. There, surrounded I suppose with plain bare walls, He ate the simplest fare: the paschal lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs; there, girt like the commonest of slaves, He washed His own disciples' feet; and there, reclining on His simple couch, a Man of sorrows and well acquainted with grief, He opened heaven to faith, the many mansions to mere mortal eyes. This was His hour of respite before the final agony, this His brief haven of repose before Gethsemane, this was His little foretaste of the heavenly feast. How it was marred by the infirmities of those to whom He clung for sympathy, by their shameful wrangling for the chiefest seats, by the black shadow of the traitor's treachery, by the self-confidence of Peter's speech. And yet our Lord so abounds with hope by power of the Holy Ghost, that even from these mean surroundings He can look brightly forward to the future, and see clear

spread before His eyes the infinite glories of heaven. There the Apostles, not on those poor rude couches, but on twelve thrones, shall judge the tribes of Israel: there He will drink the paschal wine with them anew in the kingdom of God.

Without attempting to explain these words of mystery, we may at least gather from them this much of comfort for ourselves. If Christ so earnestly longed to eat this earthly passover, marred as it was by wrangling and treachery and pride, must He not far more earnestly desire that later and that greater festival, of which this at the best was but a most imperfect foretaste and foreshadowing, a festival followed by no suffering—for suffering shall be no more—and marred by no jealousy or treachery or pride—for all these former things shall clean have passed away? If even of that first feast our Lord could say, "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer," what shall He say of the second? And if He seems to linger and delay, may we not be quite certainly assured that this is from no lack of eagerness, no cooling of desire, but simply from some great Divine necessity, unknown indeed to us, but clearly known to Him? Though He tarry, wait for Him, for it is but a little time, and He that shall come will come, and will

not tarry. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Surely the place where Jesus uttered these grand promises gives dignity and beauty and pathos to the words. The borrowed room to which He need never, save for Divinest necessity of love, have stooped, and where He could only snatch an hour or two's brief, chequered rest, suggests the many mansions of the eternal home which but for that same Divine necessity of love He never need have left, and where the rest remaining for His people shall be for ever assured. And here we see Him with a mind not to be changed by time or place, the same in the borrowed chamber as in the royal home, the same in kingliness, the same in His humility, Master and Lord in that poor upper chamber upon earth, Companion, Servant, Friend, in those many mansions in heaven. "I go to prepare a place for you."

He goes Himself. He leaves it to no angel, however bright, however glorious, however conversant, like Gabriel, with human haunts and human happiness. He serves Himself in heaven. And we can surely see the reason why He serves. No angel knows us well

enough. The place for us must be prepared by one who has lived in our homes, and who is conversant entirely with our poor earthly joys. The fact that He prepares the place is double pledge of happiness. We shall not be overdazzled with unfamiliar brightness and glory beyond our power to endure; yet not one element of pure, true human happiness shall be left out or wanting in the full felicity of the eternal home. Home it will be, home still, a Father's home, amidst its brightest glories; and every right capacity, and every lawful aspiration, and all true sense of beauty, and all pure affections of heart, and all delight in life itself and in the powers of life shall find its fulness and completion there. At least, as much as this must be implied in these few simple words, and how much more who shall say? Only the day will declare.

But when we remember not the place alone, but the immediate occasion of the words, their force and tenderness are even more brought out. One cloud after another had cast its gloom upon the sweetness of that social intercourse and the joyful gladness of that great national feast, a shadow of disunion first and then a dark black cloud of baneful treachery. Now the confusion following the announcement that "One of you shall betray Me" has passed away. The traitor has

gone forth on his dark errand of satanic wickedness. His absence seems to lift a heavy incubus and bring with it relief and freedom of unrestrained confidence. The Saviour breaks out into a hymn of glory, and utters His great new command of brotherly love, but as He does so tells of a coming journey where the disciples cannot follow Him. Peter, who had been parted most of the day from his Master, cannot bear the thought of further separation just when the joy of communion was at its full. "Lord, it is good for us to be here." "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake." And then there came the answer, so crushing and so mysterious, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied Me thrice." We can well imagine what silence and gloom fell on the company, how every heart was subdued and perplexed, and how the full stream of returning gladness was suddenly checked once more. What a blank pause of amazement there must have been, each looking on his fellow, all in distress, and Peter the most bewildered and most perplexed of them all! Then, to meet the needs of all, the needs especially of one who needed most, the Saviour unlocked his lips in those grand words of comfort and

peace, "Let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in Me." They were words meant to sustain St. Peter after his grievous fall. Our Lord had said the severest things in Peter's hearing, of those who should deny Him. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of Him shall the Son of man be ashamed. Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I deny before My Father and all the holy angels." With words like these in his ears, St. Peter might well be tempted to despair, and so the Lord provides him with some sweeter music to give him a blessed hope. "In My Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."

We all know what pain it is to a loving heart to have in faithfulness to utter a reproof. The heart of Jesus was pained. It was a duty to speak out and tell St. Peter plainly how weak he was. But Jesus could never forget the genuine affection that underlay that rash and vain self-confidence. "Since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still." Our Lord remembered him still, and thought of all his little acts of devotion and love. In spite of all the warning, reproof and blame, none, not even the smallest, of those

acts should ever be forgotten or left out of account. St. Peter might deny our Lord, and do it with cursing and oaths, in terror of a little servant-maid. But none the less it remained true that Peter had spent the greater part of that day preparing a place for his Lord, in little acts of humble service and love. And see the measure of our Lord's reward. He never forgets the very smallest service done out of true love to Him. He always repays it in kind. He always repays it right royally, according to His kingly liberality, and not according to our mean deserts. Peter and John spent the forenoon preparing the paschal lamb, the unleavened cakes, the wine, the tables, the couches, for Christ's repast, doing their little best to make an earthly chamber seemly and meet for Him. Christ answers them thus: "I go to My Father's mansions to spend long years in fitting out a home for you. I do it Myself, entrust it to no angel-hands; and then I come again to meet you—My heart is in that meeting all along—to take you aside to Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also, in fulness of unbroken intercourse, in rapture of unsullied bliss. This is the measure of My reward; this is how, having loved My own that are in the world, I love them to the end."

Surely the thought of Peter's work for Jesus, in which with his fellow-Apostle he represented the twelve, adds a peculiar grace and appropriateness to the words which Jesus spoke to comfort and to cheer his saddened heart. Christ had so many sorrows of His own to think of then, but nothing could make Him forget the service of a friend, however wayward, however rash and headstrong, that friend might be. "As an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear." The plain, outspoken words of Jesus exactly fitted Peter's case, and though apparently wasted then, strongly availed for his recovery. By fear and hope and love, the Saviour's discipline was carried out, until, by the blended action of promise and reproof and by the constant influence of heartfelt charity, the man of fitful impulses was formed into the rooted character of rock.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DENIAL OF ST. PETER.

I think that look of Christ might seem to say,
“Thou, Peter, art thou then a common stone
Which I at last must break My heart upon,
For all God’s charge to His high angels may
Guard My foot better? Did I yesterday
Wash thy feet, My beloved, that they should run
Quick to deny Me ’neath the morning sun?
And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray?
The cock crows coldly. Go and manifest
A late contrition, but no bootless fear.
For when thy deathly need is bitterest,
Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here;
My voice to God and angels shall attest,
‘Because I *know* this man, let him be clear.’”

E. B. BROWNING.

LORD GEORGE LYTTTELTON last century wrote a little treatise which has won him more permanent glory than all his statesmanship, although he was a leading statesman of his day. It was entitled “Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul.” He ably argued that that conversion and apostleship, duly considered, was sufficient of itself

to prove Christianity to be a Divine revelation. And he succeeded in his task ; for although his book has been widely read, it has never been answered from that day to this.

I am not sure that another writer, equally clear-headed and eloquent, might not write a second treatise of almost equally convincing character, founding his argument on the denial and subsequent confession of St. Peter, and nothing else. The contrast between St. Peter before the Resurrection and St. Peter afterwards has often been drawn : the cowardly shrinking from a servant-maid and the bold confession before the Sanhedrim. Such courage following such cowardice is quite incompatible with the theory that St. Peter knew that he was proclaiming a lie. Conscious imposture has never yet bred such a dauntless heroism, and it never will. Nor will the theory that the Resurrection was the idle fancy of a heated brain consist with the simple narrative as it has come to us. Nothing could be more removed from the Apostle's thoughts than the imagination of such a thing. It is plain that the Resurrection came to the life of Peter not as a quiet development of slowly ripening thoughts and tenderly cherished dreams and aspirations. It came as a revelation, a surprise, a revolution of all his moral being :

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a second birth. Again, the candour, the naïveté, the simplicity, of the fourfold account of Peter's denial carries with it the irresistible impression of simple truth. What should induce the Apostles and Evangelists so widely to blazon their own shame in that of their foremost leader unless they were fired by the sacred passion of speaking truth; and what should render them so utterly careless of harmonising their accounts except the consciousness of simple honesty in all they wrote?

It may be that in some respects the conversion of St. Paul presents a simpler and plainer issue to the direct apologist for Christianity. But certainly the story of Peter's denial is unrivalled for the comfort it brings to those who do believe the Gospel message, but are troubled by their own frequent want of thorough loyalty to what they know. To weak and sinful mortals the story of Peter's denial is ever powerful and fresh. The words of Christ to him, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," find new fulfilment every day, and will do to the end of time. So Luther wrote, "When I think of St. Peter, my very heart leaps for joy. If I could draw a picture of Peter, I would paint on every hair of his head, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins.'" So a little sick boy, hearing

the story read only the other day, said simply, "O mamma, I do love Peter. I like him better than John. I think John always did what is right, but Peter was naughty and good, and that is just like me." Simple words enough, but they express the thoughts of thousands of hearts. The very faults of Peter, so candidly confessed, and so sincerely wept over, and so bravely overcome and conquered, endear him to us more than a life of spotless and unchequered innocence.

I have already referred to St. Peter's denial in its bearing on his whole history and character, but the importance attached to it in the Scripture narrative is so great, that it will certainly not be out of place to occupy another paper in somewhat minutely comparing the different accounts preserved to us of this strange incident. Let us first put them side by side. (See two following pages.)

Now there are no doubt serious variations in these four accounts, but a little patient thought will readily show us that there is no actual contradiction between one and another, nothing that a full knowledge of every circumstance might not entirely reconcile.

The first point is to get a clear idea of the scene on which the drama was played. All four Evangelists agree in their account of this. The denial took place in

FIRST DENIAL.

ST. MATTHEW.

But Peter followed Him
afar off unto the high priest's
palace [court, R.V.], and
went in and sat with the
servants to see the end. . .
Now Peter sat without in the
palace: and a damsel came
unto him, saying, Thou also
wast with Jesus of Galilee.
But he denied before them
all, saying, I know not what
thou sayest.

ST. MARK.

And Peter followed Him
afar off, even into the palace
of the high priest: and he
sat with the servants, and
warned himself at the fire. . .
And as Peter was beneath in
the palace, there cometh one
of the maids of the high
priest: and when she saw
Peter warming himself, she
looked upon him, and said,
And thou also wast with
Jesus of Nazareth. But he
denied, saying, I know not,
neither understand I what
thou sayest. And he went
out into the porch; and the
cock crew.

ST. LUKE.

Then took they Him, and
led Him, and brought Him
into the high priest's house.
And Peter followed afar off.
And when they had kindled
a fire in the midst of the hall,
and were set down together,
Peter sat down among them.
But a certain maid beheld
him as he sat by the fire, and
earnestly looked upon him,
and said, This man was also
with Him. But he denied
Him, saying, Woman, I
know Him not.

ST. JOHN.

And Simon Peter followed
Jesus, and so did another
disciple: that disciple was
known unto the high priest,
and went in with Jesus into
the palace of the high priest.
But Peter stood at the door
without. Then went out that
other disciple which was
known unto the high priest,
and spake unto her that kept
the door, and brought in
Peter. Then saith the dam-
sel that kept the door unto
Peter, Art not thou also one
of this man's disciples? He
saith, I am not. And the
servants and officers stood
there, who had made a fire
of coals (for it was cold): and
they warmed themselves: and
Peter stood with them, and
warned himself.

SECOND DENIAL.

ST. MATTHEW.

And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied, with an oath, I do not know the man.

ST. MARK.

And a maid [R.V., the maid] saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again.

ST. LUKE.

And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

ST. JOHN.

And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of His disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not.

THIRD DENIAL.

ST. MATTHEW.

And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them, for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny Me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly.

ST. MARK.

And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them : for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

ST. LUKE.

And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him : for he is a Galilean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

ST. JOHN.

One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again : and immediately the cock crew.

the open court of the high-priest's palace. This court was entered by a gate (*θύρα*) kept by a doorkeeper (*θυρωρός*), which opened into a portico (*πυλῶν*), and beyond the portico into the open space, where the servants and underlings had lit their brazier of coals, on account of the coldness of the weather, which seems to be mentioned as something remarkable. If any one asks what had become of St. John while Peter was denying Christ, the answer is simple and plain. He had gone in with Jesus to the very council-chamber where the examination was going on. His was at once the boldest and the safest course. By keeping close to Jesus he kept furthest from temptation. Those within had other thoughts to occupy them, and though St. John was known to the high-priest, we do not read of his being either molested or challenged. It is not easy to say how far St. John's familiarity with the high-priest would under present circumstances be a protection to him or the contrary, but we do right to remember that Peter had one peculiar cause of personal alarm. The hasty blow by which he had cut off the ear of Malchus laid him open to a specific charge of rioting and violence. To complete our picture of the scene, we need to recollect that the council-chamber was raised above the open court,

and apparently had large windows opening out upon it,* through which something could be seen, though probably not very much distinctly heard, of what was going on inside. No doubt in the course of the night many would come and go between the fire in the court and the chamber of trial, each fresh comer from within bringing his quota of news. The feelings of the two Apostles are lightly touched upon, but with that gentle touch of inimitable truthfulness so characteristic of the Gospel narrative. The other disciple went in "*with Jesus.*" Nearness to Him was the one uppermost thought, as when he leaned on His breast at supper, and stood beneath His cross. St. Peter sat with the servants "*to see the end.*" Love no doubt was there as well, but love somewhat alloyed with curiosity, and already tinged darkly with despair. "All is up with us. I cannot fight. Nothing is left but to watch the miserable outcome I thought I might have hindered by my loyalty, but He would not allow."

There is something exceedingly pictorial and graphic in the mention of the charcoal fire, the company around it, and Peter warming himself. How every circum-

*This I gather from the Lord's turning and looking on Peter. Others suppose that He was being conducted across the court from one room to another at the time of this warning look.

stance was stamped upon his memory. We can well imagine how uncongenial he found his fellowship. We know what injustice, violence, and wrong went on within ; we know the brutality of the responsible rulers. The irresponsible servants who in the very presence of the priests and rulers could treat the Lord as they did were not likely to be choice in their language and expressions as they chattered eagerly around that glowing light ; like master, like man, with just a little added touch of inborn vulgarity. Some of them had been in the garden, had fallen down on their faces, struck with amazement and awe, before the majesty of Christ, and now, mean souls, they were taking their petty revenge, and making amends by their coarse ribaldry for their apparent cowardice. Now that the Lord was safely bound and held, their tongues were loosed. They dared both to brag and to jest, and Peter sat with them and held his peace. Here was an apt school for denial of Christ. How very wretched, how very dispirited, he must have felt.

The last of the first packed assembly of councillors had probably now arrived, and the maid at the gate, finding herself no longer wanted there, draws near the fire. She is at once struck by Peter's look of misery as the lines of his face are lit up in the ruddy glow. She

looks at him steadily, and says, "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" The question, whatever the exact words in which it was framed, took him aback. He seems to have hastily started up. He has no intention to deny the charge, but he dare not admit it; he will pretend not to have understood the question. "I know not, neither understand I, what thou sayest." Many eyes were fastened on him. It seemed to him a mere equivocation, but it could have but one meaning for all those there,—“Woman, I know Him not.” If further urged, he may have uttered these very words, for he was on the incline, and found it now impossible to stop himself. Those eyes all fixed on him were dreadful, and he must move away; he must make one more desperate attempt to save himself. He rose from the group of underlings, went to the porch, and as he did so, a cock crew. The sound then fell on heedless ears, but afterwards he well remembered it.

The attention of the others may by any trivial circumstance unknown to us have been distracted from him for a while, but presently the doorkeeper, returning to her duties, spies him again (St. Mark); she tells another maid, who passes on the news to the gossiping group. Peter, in his restlessness, forced to face it out, returns to the fire, and his reappearance

there is the signal for a fresh outburst of eager interrogation. A maid and a man show conspicuously among his new tormentors, and he replies, with an oath, "I do not know the man." The first examination of Jesus before Annas was now over, and the remainder of the councillors were coming in by degrees preparatory to the final confirmation of the sentence by the whole Sanhedrim at dawn of day. The interval inside the hall was occupied by grossest insults heaped upon the Saviour, as one already condemned to death for blasphemy, and utterly outside the pale of all respect. In the court the loungers were most likely occupied with passing their remarks about the councillors as they arrived one by one and passed through the court to the hall. Thus for an hour attention was again distracted from the miserable Peter.

At the end of that time the kinsman of Malchus saw him. They recognised each other, and there was a most specific charge: "I saw thee in the garden with Him." St. Peter denied again with the utmost vehemence, for here was a new danger. The charge of riot and attempted murder of an officer of justice was being brought very close home to him. His vehemence betrayed him. His broad Galilean *patois* declared itself most unmistakably, and raised a general laugh.

"Thou art a Galilean ; thy speech agreeth thereto." Poor Peter, floundering worse and worse in the deep mire ! He began to curse and to swear, saying, " I know not this man of Whom ye speak." What could the more assuredly betray his native accent than all these ready oaths ? And suddenly a cock crew, and by a sudden strong revulsion of feeling, he called to mind the word that Jesus spoke. He raised his face, and saw the Lord's own eyes turned gently and reproachfully upon him, and he went out and wept bitterly.

I have thus shown, I hope, that the several accounts are far from being irreconcilable, that rather they naturally fit in with one another and supplement each other. I have only to add a few remarks about that brazier of coals, that forms the centre of this Divinely drawn and most arresting picture. The mention of it, so earnestly repeated, has not merely, I think, a pictorial and graphic interest. This weird, unhappy scene, long before was dimly shadowed forth by the great prophet Isaiah. The fiftieth chapter of Isaiah prophesies of the sufferings of Christ in the high-priest's judgment hall : " I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not My face from shame and spitting." The same chapter ends with

these verses : "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light ? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks : walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have at Mine hand ; ye shall lie down in sorrow."

I think this passage must have been deeply printed on St. Peter's memory after the risen Saviour had explained the prophecy. And surely it was in his mind when he wrote the closing verses of the second chapter of his first Epistle, and spoke of Christ, "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again ; when He suffered, He threatened not ; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously : Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness : by Whose stripes ye were healed."

Again, after the Resurrection, when the Lord appeared to the seven disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, they saw "a fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, and bread." It is a strange circumstance. We should not expect it as an essential part of any reappearance of the risen Lord. Surely it must have had a purpose of its own

beyond the mere provision of a warm repast. At least, it is well to notice what actually happened around that sacred fire. Christ Himself drew near in the early morning light. No ribald underlings were there, but only friends ; no suffering, but only joy ; and when St. Peter had been fitted and prepared by quiet, holy converse on the free and open hillside of his native Galilee, then and there the longed-for opportunity was granted him, the triple denial was trebly reversed, the old vow of loyalty, " With Thee I am ready to go to prison and to death," was solemnly renewed. Right nobly the vow was fulfilled, and the parting message of the great Apostle reminds us both of his fall and his recovery : " Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." Thus the last command of him who said, " I know Him not," was, Grow in the *knowledge* of Christ ; the last breathing of the heart's desire of him who denied the Christ was, Glory be to Jesus, my Saviour and my Lord.

CHAPTER VIII.

ST. PETER'S FIRST EASTER DAY.

“Go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee.”—ST. MARK xvi. 7.

“The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.”—ST. LUKE xxiv. 34.

“Blessed be God, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”—1 PETER i. 3.

“So is it still ; to holy tears
In lonely hours Christ risen appears.”

KEBLE.

WE hear a great deal from the pulpit about St. Peter's denial of Christ upon the Maundy Thursday night, but, so far as my experience goes, comparatively little about his forgiveness on Easter Day. During the long hours and amid the multiplied services of Passion Week, there is ample time for preachers to dwell upon the lessons of Peter's fall ; but when it comes to Easter Day, the subject of the Resurrection is so vast, the time for enforcing its lessons so limited, that its bearing on this or that individual life gets well-nigh overlooked. Yet if we would fairly

realise what the rising of Jesus from the grave means for each one of us now, we could hardly find a more fruitful method of study, than the inquiry, What did the rising of Jesus mean to some *one* then? It will give unity, precision, and definiteness to our thoughts about the resurrection of our Lord, if, withdrawing our eyes for a while from its grand issues to the world at large, we simply examine its influence upon a single life. No life presents itself more favourably for such a study than that of St. Peter. He has left us in his first Epistle his own record in his own words of what Christ's rising was to him: an act of wonderful mercy, a new birth to a living and new hope, bright with immortality: and in the Gospels we have abundant commentary on these words. None of the disciples figure so largely and are introduced in so many differing circumstances upon that day. The very first thought of the risen Saviour was for St. Peter, who had denied Him thrice. The women who were earliest at the tomb were met at the very outset by an angel's message for him, for "entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment, and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He

is risen ; He is not here : behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee : there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you."

No doubt the angel received the message from Christ. The very first thought of the risen Lord was a thought of forgiveness for a sorrow-stricken penitent. It would be sufficiently wonderful if this was all. But not only are the thoughts of Jesus most wonderful and gracious, but the expression of those thoughts is a yet deeper marvel. This message did not reach the Apostle, and was not intended to reach the Apostle, at once. It went first through the angel, then through the women. St. Peter needed some preparation before he could even receive this message in the spirit in which it was sent. The message itself was only a preparation for greater things to come. It was kind of the Lord to speak to the angel at once, because whenever the message arrived St. Peter could see and feel, "His very first thought was for me." It was kinder still to provide for delay in its transmission. The thing would have seemed too impossible if he had heard it all at once ; the words, however graciously meant, would still have failed of their purpose if they had come as the very first intimation of that tremendous fact the resurrection

of Christ. In the great whirl of emotion and excitement, the Apostle might easily have failed to notice the gentle thoughtfulness of Christ's most beautiful words, or even have turned it into an actual argument against their truth. The tidings that the Lord had sent a message to him, and such an unlikely sort of message, would have appeared to St. Peter, before he had ocular personal proof that the tomb was empty indeed, too utterly beyond belief to allow of his even entertaining the thought at all. Still less would he have stopped to read the writing, so to speak, between the lines.

Let us return then to Peter, and see the order, so far as we can trace it, in which the proofs of Jesus risen were brought before his mind. We are not told what happened to him after he went out and wept bitterly. We are not told whither he turned his steps. We next find him on the Easter morning dwelling with John and Mary the mother of Christ. The women had started forth very early to finish their embalming, too engrossed in their preparations to think at first about the stone. Just as they became fully conscious of that great difficulty, they lifted their eyes and saw that the barrier was rolled away. The stone was so large that even at a distance and in the dim deceptive morning light they saw that it was gone. The thought at once

suggested itself to Mary Magdalene that robbers had been there, to plunder the precious spices on which they had spent perhaps their little all. She turns at once to seek the readiest help, and finds out Peter and John. The other women meanwhile go on their way, receive the angel message, and depart. Peter and John come running to the tomb. They see the linen clothes lie. This is no robbers' work. When both had entered and examined for themselves, they both depart, St. John believing, the very first to grasp entirely the great new truth, and Peter wondering in himself at what had come to pass.

The wonder of Peter involved at least the possibility that Jesus might have risen. And if the Lord were risen, the thought must very soon have followed, "When, where, how, shall I meet with Him? How should I dare to meet with Him?" The mingled longing and dread would surely be unbearable. There is much of awe in the thought of meeting any one, however loved, returned from the gates of the grave, but now for Peter to meet Christ, whilst the echoes of his own curses were still ringing in his ears and the sight of the Saviour's sufferings was clear before his eyes! The thought had terror in it as well as joy. Should he not cry once more, "Depart from

me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" ? How could he bear to meet with Him Whom yet he longed to see ?

Not till some interval had passed, and thoughts like these had time clearly to shape themselves before his mind, the message of the women came to him. At first they had been too frightened, too confused, to speak to any one. And now St. Peter was better ready to receive their word. St. John certainly knew of Peter's denial and cursing and sin, but there is nothing to show us that the women knew of it. We are so thoroughly familiar with the great Passion history, that we are apt to think that all was known at once, and to forget that we have the advantage in many ways over eye-witnesses. The facts to them only came out by degrees, and whilst they saw much of which we have no account, many things quite familiar to us were only very slowly made known to them, and we are assured that the facts we have are the typical and all-important facts, unembarrassed and unencumbered by much which must to them have been only bewildering detail. So most likely these women as yet knew little or nothing of Peter's grievous sin. The message may have come to them as one perfectly natural. Peter had always been a leader, and so the angel emphasised that *he* was to be told. Besides, he was lodging

apart from the rest ; and there might be a natural reluctance to intrude upon the sacred privacy of that dwelling where the loved Apostle sought comfort for the pierced heart of the virgin-mother so solemnly entrusted to his care. And so they deliver their tale, little imagining the depth of hidden meaning beneath those words. To Peter they supplied the very craving of his soul, and yet they told him nothing that he would rather learn from the lips of the Master Himself. They set at rest the question whether he ever should behold the Lord. He should, in Galilee, and for that mighty shrinking in his breast, the words just hinted that the Saviour knew of it. "It must be hard for thee to meet thy injured Lord, but lo ! the way is open for thee, and nothing on His part shall make it harder still."

We see this in even stronger and clearer light when we remember the passage, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night, for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad, but after I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee" (St. Matt. xxvi. 31). That prophecy was uttered in full prospect of St. Peter's approaching denial, in close connection with the direct prophecy of that event. And whatever change had come

over Peter's feelings since, nothing had altered the mind of Christ. Now in the retrospect of Peter's sin the very same promise is repeated, the very same word is used, that wonderful pictorial word,* which made so deep an impression upon St. Peter's mind: "I go before" you "as the shepherd goes before his sheep." The flock dispersed in the garden of Gethsemane should be reassembled again on the familiar plains of Galilee, and those who were as sheep going astray should yet return again to the great Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

After a message like that St. Peter could never be in peace till he had really seen the Lord again and told his penitence. But even now the Saviour does not reveal Himself at once. He leaves time for this new message also to bear its fruit, whilst He Himself is journeying the dusty road to Emmaus, opening to two dull pupils treasures hid from them hitherto in their Old Testament Scriptures. During this interval Mary Magdalene, after having been to the other disciples, came in with her report. She verily had seen the Lord. And He had called her by her name. He had told her too that the time in which He might be seen was short. "I ascend to My Father and your Father,

* Πρωάγω.

to My God and your God." And though He was risen and different, He yet was still the same. He called His disciples "My brethren," and He made no exception to that name. Here was fresh food for Peter's thoughts. He well knew what a woman the Magdalene had been. The Saviour had cast seven devils out of her; and now, having overcome death and destroyed him that hath the power of death, even the devil, He deemed it not unfitting to show Himself first to her. Here was fresh food for Peter's thoughts. Here was a fresh door of hope to him who was being begotten again to a hope living through Jesus' rising from the dead.

We have traced the record of how our Saviour prepared St. Peter to meet with Him again. There is strong indirect evidence that all this training was not lost upon the Apostle, that these things left a deep and lasting impression upon his mind. St. Mark is well known to Church history as Peter's interpreter. It is St. Mark, and no other Evangelist, who records for us the words of the angel, "Go your way; tell His disciples and Peter." It is St. Mark, and no other Evangelist, who records that when He was risen from the dead He appeared *first of all* unto Mary Magdalene, *out of whom He had cast seven devils.*

At last—most likely, I think, while Cleopas and that other were wending their way back from Emmaus—Simon and Jesus really met, and Simon was forgiven. It would almost seem as if our Lord had broken off so suddenly from Cleopas mindful that Peter would find it very difficult to take his place amongst his brother-Apostles again before he had made his peace with his offended Master. There should not be one moment of needless delay, and so at last they met. We know no more. Nor would we wish to know. We should all desire to claim for ourselves the privilege of having secrets with Christ. And what we claim for ourselves we certainly must grant to others too. None more respect the sacredness of any secret confidence than Jesus our Saviour. And we may love Him for this with all our hearts and souls. Such treasures of unknown love are stored with Him, the tender confidences of so many hearts. But even now the dealings of Christ with Peter upon that Easter Day are not complete. He is emboldened now, through Jesus' thoughtfulness, to meet with all the rest. They gather once again, most likely in the very room where Christ had washed their feet, and given His solemn warning, and spoken His comfortable words, and instituted the Holy Supper to be the comfort of His people for all

time. There they are gathered once again, and there the Saviour meets with them. Was it nothing to Peter that in the very spot where he had made those boastful professions, so woefully belied in fact, and before the very men who heard him speak and knew how the words had failed—there, in that very spot, the Saviour stood and blessed him with a double absolution, and in the strength of that forgiveness commissioned him together with the rest for Apostolic work?

“And He breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.” How often has comfort been brought to a stricken, wounded spirit, to whom the past and its memories are full of pain, by the simple opening out of some new sphere of usefulness, something worth living for in time to come, something to lure the vision onwards to the brightness before, instead of letting it for ever linger on the dark shades behind. The Saviour, Whose glory it is to heal the broken in heart, was not forgetful of this special balm. Nothing was left undone that Christ could do to make the Resurrection powerful in Peter’s life, to make it speak to him of pardon and new life. Is it not beautiful?

Two thoughts arise from this study: a thought of comfort and a thought of warning for all time. In the

record of the risen Lord's forgiveness for Peter's sin, we see the promise of our own forgiveness by the same risen Christ. There are always many who one way or another have been ashamed to own their knowledge of Jesus, and who are still ashamed to meet the One they have so wronged. There are always many who need such comfort as this. There is something so awful and so mysterious in the thought of one who has gone through all the dark valley of the shadow of death, probed all the blackness of that grim mystery that baffles mortal eyes, and then come back again ! We do not wonder that the first disciples were frightened when on that Easter evening, through the unopened doors, the Saviour stood in their midst. We too should have been frightened, and sometimes we too are. Can this glorious risen Saviour be really the same in love and gentleness as when He trod our earth ? We should like to know that all the bitter suffering He bore for us so wrongfully upon the shameful Cross has not embittered Him in any way, that all the glory of His risen power has placed no fresh and impassable barrier between ourselves and Him. In the forgiveness of Peter we have the very assurance we need. Our Lord, as Peter himself had reason to declare, is no respecter of persons. His dealing with St. Peter is

only typical of how He deals with all. The first and foremost thought of the risen Lord is ever and always towards the sorrow-stricken penitents. They are the nearest and closest to His heart and to His mind. He meets with thousands daily in every part of His earth, He communes with them in utter privacy, He breathes His peace and calm, He strengthens them for work, and all their secrets and confidences with Him are as perfectly safeguarded as if there were no other in this wide universe but just those two alone.

This is a thought of comfort, is it not? But even here we have a thought of warning too. Think of the permanence of character. We find the life of Jesus when He rose taken up again just where He had relinquished it into His Father's hands. The mysterious sojourn in the realms of the grave, the last strong, victorious wrestling of Christ with the arch-enemy there out of sight down in the very stronghold of his empire, and all that passed incomprehensible to us in that tremendous interval of death, all this produced much change in the bodily appearance of our Lord; He was gifted with powers much enlarged in every way: but in one thing, so far as we can see, there was no change, no change at all—I mean, His character. His last thoughts before He suffered were for St. Peter;

His first thoughts when He rose were also for him. He last met His Apostles in a large upper room and washed their feet; He met them there again, and, with the same humility, He showed them the wounds in His own.

Our sole hope of a glorified body depends upon the fact that Jesus rose with such a body, the first-fruits of the dead. Pagans have dimly shadowed forth an immortality of the soul, though rather as a guess than as a solid fact. The resurrection of the body is a distinctively Christian doctrine, drawn from the rising of Jesus Himself from the dead.

Well, if the Resurrection analogy holds good, as it surely does, in the one respect, why may it not in the other? Are we so sure, nay have we any reason to suppose, that anything will happen to us as we rest and moulder under the churchyard sod to make us different in character from what we were on earth? Are not presumption, analogy, reason, the other way? There is nothing so permanent as character. The resurrection body will be different from the body with which we were laid in the grave. There is nothing to make us think that our character will be different when we rise from our character when we are buried out of sight. "Jesus Himself," we are told once and again,

appeared ; and "this same Jesus" shall come again. We, too, ourselves, no other, no different, shall arise to give an account of the things done in our own bodies; whether they be good or whether they be bad. As we have lived, so we shall die ; and as we die, so we shall rise again. There is only one moment absolutely in our own control, and that is now. What infinite import this thought gives to each moment as it flies ! Each hour has eternity enfolded in its wings. Our thoughts determine our acts, our acts our habits, our habits our character, our character our destiny. Moment by moment unconsciously and imperceptibly we shape our future for ourselves ; but the time will come when that future shall be fixed, and that destiny shall be for ever declared and made known.

There is much that is dark and much that is mysterious in that dim spirit-world, but continuity of character and continuity of consciousness seem to be clearly revealed.

"The present moment flies,
And bears our life away ;
Lord, make Thy servants truly wise,
That we may live to-day."

CHAPTER IX.

THE SECOND WONDERFUL DRAUGHT.

IT was one thing to be forgiven, another to be reinstated in all the fulness of the Apostolic office and Apostolic primacy. St. Peter was forgiven upon the Resurrection day. He was not fully reinstated in his former place till some time afterwards, beside the Sea of Galilee, the trysting-place of Jesus' own appointment. The circumstances are not a little significant. What a strange time those forty days of waiting before our Lord ascended must have been ! Think of these few plain men, burdened with this tremendous revelation, commissioned to be the witnesses of a risen Christ to a scornful and miscreant world. What thoughts, what hopes, and what fears must have been theirs during these weeks of expectation ! How was the work to be done, the testimony borne ? The Lord meanwhile, to Whom in every difficulty they once had ready, familiar access, now is already withdrawn from their view. Once and again He showed Himself, and

then they saw Him not. How they craved for His continued presence before He suffered we know very well. When He told them, "I go to My Father," instead of being rejoiced, sorrow filled all their hearts. They could not see the need of a separation like that; and even after He rose, the same feeling remained. Thus Mary Magdalene would clasp His feet to keep Him with her still. The two at Emmaus yearned for His company. By all the training of these forty days the Lord would spiritualise the thoughts and conceptions of His followers. These seemingly fitful manifestations had all one purpose in view: to wean His disciples from the natural and yet excessive craving to keep Him in the flesh, to teach them the doctrine of His true and perfect Deity without disturbing the faith that they already had that He was perfect man.

We may perhaps compare the position of the Apostles at this time with that of the Israelites after the Passover and before they had passed the Red Sea. Christ, their Passover, had been sacrificed for them. A flood of light had been thrown on all the difficulties and trials of the past, but the future lay veiled in gloom impenetrable. They knew they had before them a glorious inheritance. They knew not how it should be won. The enemy was pressing in upon them.

The way was barred in front of them. The next step as yet seemed a step in the dark. They had no marching orders. They still were waiting the grand command, "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward." Meantime they stood at attention. They felt with Moses that the Lord would fight for them, and their part now was only to "stand still and see." So the Apostles learned to wait and trust in God.

The more we think of it, the more we are conscious that those waiting weeks were a time of tremendous strain alike to spirit and mind. So much was crowded into them. The difference between the earth in its bareness at Eastertide and in the full beauty of its early foliage at Whitsuntide is only feebly typical of the rapid development of thought and life in the Apostles during these forty days.

Men have, however, besides minds and spirits, bodies, which must be attended to. The greatest moral and spiritual crisis cannot free us altogether from bodily cares. Questions about daily bread must often be faced at times when we feel not at all inclined to give our attention to such sublunary things. So I suppose it was with the Apostles now. They had left all and followed Christ. Whilst in His company, although we read at one time of their having no more than one loaf,

at another of their being fain to appease their hunger by rubbing the ears of corn, they never were utterly destitute of food. The workman, the Lord Himself had told them, is worthy of his food. But now for a season the very Apostles themselves were, so to speak, out of work. They were in partial hiding. No crowds were following them. They had no message ready yet to give to any crowds. Their orders were to wait.

In this practical difficulty St. Peter comes boldly to the front. Action of some sort is absolutely needful, and he is the one to suggest the new departure. His eager impulsiveness here stands him in good stead. To the six who are with him, he says, "I go a-fishing," and they reply, "We also go with thee."

There is something very grand in the thought of these Apostles, charged with this great revelation, going so simply back to that first work and earliest trade of theirs. It was a noble resolve to fill up even this little interval with useful toil. It was a great thing to be called from the catching of fish to be fishers of men; but it showed still more grace to be able to step back quietly into that earliest position, and, whilst heart and mind were full to overflowing with thoughts that prophets and kings had long desired and vainly craved to know, to be able to occupy their

hands with all diligence in pulling at the oar and paying out and hauling in the rough rope nets. "And that night they caught nothing." Was it, indeed, a wrong resolve, another rash, mistaken judgment, this new departure of St. Peter's? The morning should declare. Weary with toil, they draw towards the shore. The dim mists, as yet undispersed by the sun, are shrouding the lower slopes of the western hills in a soft, silvery, and half-transparent veil. A figure stands out on the shore, bathed in that atmosphere of golden glory, half hidden, half revealed; and a voice is coming to them over the ripples of the lake, a voice of kindly inquiry: "Sirs, what success? Have you caught anything worth eating?" They answer, "No." Again the voice is heard: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." They cast, therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

So far nothing had happened extraordinary. It would be a most natural instinct of kindness in any stranger passing upon a morning like that and seeing a craft coming to shore to ask after their luck. The term "children" had nothing particular in it to rouse suspicion on the Apostles' part. It meant no more than "my lads" or "my boys," if one may be allowed

without irreverence to render it into the most colloquial form of speech. The point to bear in mind, however we express it, is simply this : that any stranger might well have used the words without exciting remark. Nor, again, was there anything very wonderful in this inquiry being so promptly followed up by a direction how to act. It is often quite easy for one at a height above the water to follow the motions of shoals of fish which would be perfectly hidden from the fishermen upon the deck of their boat ; and it is a thing not at all unknown for watchmen to stand on the cliffs on purpose to signal to those below the movements of these shoals. It was natural, then, that St. Peter, at whose suggestion the undertaking began, and who would feel himself more than any other responsible for their earlier ill-success, should be at first wholly occupied in gathering in the draught.

The whole incident hitherto had been so exceedingly natural that we must not think there is anything strange in St. Peter's slowness to recognise a higher presence and will. St. John, with his rapid and clear intuition, perceived at once the bearing of the incident. The Lord for Whom they were waiting was standing there. He tells his thought to his friends. Fish, nets and all are forgotten at once, and Peter is found pros-

trate and dripping with water before his Master and Lord. Then follows the action of dragging the great net to land and the feast of quiet refreshment, with Jesus for their Host.

A story like this could never have been invented. Fancy a forger setting about imagining a manifestation of Jesus now risen from the tomb! Would he not labour to surround it with every circumstance of mystery and awe? Who would or could conceive a simple scene like this, all in accordance with nature from first to last, the local colouring all so perfectly true, the portraiture of character so lifelike and profound? This blending of the natural and supernatural marks off the Bible miracles, and specially the miracles of Christ, from all beside. It is of a piece with the whole revelation of Jesus as the great God-man. The miracles of Jesus are the expression of inmost character. It is as signs that they compel belief. There is undoubtedly a great display of *power*; this power shows itself in methods unexpected and unforeseen. The element of *wonder* is not to be left out. But still what strikes us most is rather the great reserve of power, the absolute avoidance of mere prodigy. It is this rare blending of the human and divine, the natural and supernatural, that has made the Bible the book of

books to common men, the Bible miracles the most alluring of all wonders, the life of Christ the most attractive of all lives.

“ And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds
More strong than all poetic thought ;
Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
Or those wild eyes that watch the wave
In roarings round the coral-reef.”

Moreover this perfect correspondence of the life, the miracles which are its outcome, and the narrative which is its record, is in itself an argument of Truth.

The story is complete and perfect in itself, a very gem of narrative ; but still it gains fresh interest when we remember what had gone before.

Our thoughts are at once carried back to that earlier time when Christ on Peter's ship brought similar success. Then Peter besought the Lord to depart. Now he flings himself into the sea to come to Him ; and yet we feel at once that we are reading of the same man : his action only is different, and not his character. Now he has learnt the lesson of his utter need, he is no longer troubled about much serving or thoughts of his relative dignity and Christ's. Now he is quite content to lose the thought of self entirely at

Jesus' feet. And thus he is rendered strong. The scene is also thoroughly typical. Christ on the shore represents the Saviour in heaven, and Peter's eagerness is just that old longing to hasten and realise the future glory—a longing most right in itself, but, like all strong human yearnings, in need of discipline; and so even here our Saviour meets him, not with reproach—for there was nought to merit it—but still with gentle discipline. Before, St. Peter asked Jesus to depart and leave him to his nets, and Jesus instead called him to leave the nets and cling to Him. Now, St. Peter is only eager to cling to the Master Himself, and Jesus replies by saying, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." He sends him back to the nets. And we see Peter, like some old hero, straining each muscle and nerve in hauling that mighty burden to land, ay, and succeeding too. Oh, what a task it was! How hard to land a single great fish, and here were a hundred and fifty-three! And what does it all signify? Surely this. The glory could not be realised until the work was complete, until the fish were not merely caught, but safely brought to land, in other words until the disciples whom Simon should convert were duly trained and disciplined for heaven; and so the miracle becomes the fitting prelude

to the wonderful scene which follows, in which the Apostle receives the commission not simply to convert, but, higher and more arduous toil, to feed and tend the flock committed to his charge.

The bringing those fish in safety thus to shore is a kind of paraphrase into the language of Peter's own craft and trade of that old promise of the Psalm, "He that goeth on his way weeping, and beareth precious seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him."

The joy and feast of Jesus in His glory are not complete—so He graciously wills—till we have brought our quota to the banquet, though we must always remember that even that quota, whether it be more or less, is His gift after all. We owe it all to Him.

CHAPTER X.

CHRIST'S INDIVIDUAL SYMPATHY.

“Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?”—ST. JOHN xxi. 15-17.

THERE are some points in this story which do not appear on the face of the English translation; and even our Revisers, with all their scrupulous accuracy, have failed to make them plain. They simply inform us in the margin that two different words are used for “love,” and do not attempt to render them differently. The words are ἀγαπάω (*agapao*), used of love in its highest and most abstract form, a thing, as Dr. Westcott describes it, absolute, heavenly, eternal, and φιλέω (*philēo*), a word descriptive of the warmth and ardour of personal affection. St. Peter throughout uses the latter word, our Lord only in the last question. “And Peter was grieved because Jesus said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me?” grieved, that is, not merely that the question was repeated just three times, the very number of times he had denied his Lord, but grieved also the more because the very form of the

question was altered, and Christ seemed to cast a doubt upon that of which St. Peter felt most sure: his personal attachment, his ardent affection for his Lord. There might be elements of weakness and baseness in that affection which made it unworthy the highest name for love, but to have his loyalty seemingly doubted and, as he must have felt, to have deserved a question like that, this was the saddest thing of all. "Lovest thou Me more than these? Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. Feed My lambs." The conduct of Peter appeared again to assert for himself a priority of love. He was the first to be at Jesus' feet. It was an instinct of leadership, inborn in him, and not a conscious striving of ambition now. This time the thought of the others had not been present with him, but only the thought of Christ. He had hastened, not to be there *the first*, but simply to be there *at once*, a great difference. He will no longer trust his own self-knowledge. He simply appeals to Jesus, Who knew his heart. "Thou knowest that I love Thee." Not "I know," but "Thou knowest," and not "I love Thee more than these," but simply "I love Thee." The special requisite for faithfully feeding Christ's little ones is personal love to the Saviour, without regard to what other people

think. "How do I look compared with others?" That thought of self-consciousness spoils work for Christ's little ones as much as anything.

The next charge is to be the shepherd of the sheep, embracing the whole sphere of pastoral work and discipline : seeking the lost, binding up the wounded, tending the sick, restraining the wanderers. All this can only be rightly done in a spirit of personal love to Christ.

The last charge is "Feed My sheep." Doctrine, teaching, is really the highest part of the pastoral charge ; and doctrine not warmed by personal love to the Saviour is not merely the highest, but the driest too.

In the last reply of St. Peter, too, there is a difference in the Greek not noticed in the Authorised Version : "Lord, Thou knowest" (with the absolute knowledge pertaining to Thee as God)—"Thou knowest all things ; Thou perceivest" (with that heart-to-heart human sympathy of man for man)—"Thou perceivest that I love Thee."

I pass rapidly over these points because they are already familiar to all who study their Greek Testament, and many who do not must often have heard them explained. Their inner meaning, their personal application to the conscience and the heart, is for the closet or the pulpit, and not for such papers as these. The

verse that follows is the one on which I would rather dwell. It is most worthy of attention. "No word from Christ can fruitless fall." But some He Himself has marked out for special pre-eminence, prefacing them by a solemn, repeated "Amen." Again, amidst all these the present has special interest as being the last of these sayings of Jesus on earth, the last that was so pronounced with this solemn, repeated asseveration by those sacred lips in which there was no guile. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young," (Greek, younger) "thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, Follow Me."

There are many points worthy of notice in these verses. They are a faithful reading of Peter's character, a true presentment of his growth in grace from the time when he said, "All of self and none of Thee!" those early self-willed days, through all the life of long discipleship to his perfected submission, when he could say, "None of self and all of Thee!" They are a wonderful comment on Peter's preceding words,

"Thou knowest all things." "Yes," says our Lord, "I do. Thy character, thy inborn wilfulness, all thy past history, and all thy future destiny—all, all is open to Me, and now I give a glimpse of it." It was by showing how thoroughly He knew him that our Lord got such a hold upon Peter, from the first day when He looked on him and read his heart, to this last-recorded interview. There was a binding, winning charm about the Saviour's frankness. With all his waywardness and self-assertiveness, St. Peter owned the spell. I think much good work and many good workers are lost to the Church because of want of frankness and courage to deal with strong, rugged, impetuous characters. Only soft, pliable people are often called on to help by those whose duty it is to call forth every possible energy on the Lord's side. We are very much afraid of untrained workers ; we like to have those who know their place, and keep to it, and give no trouble. But, I believe, very much is lost to the Church by this kind of cowardice. No one required more keeping in his place than St. Peter did. And yet our Saviour was willing to take that trouble and pains, and with what splendid results ! For it is this that deserves our notice most in the verse. Regard it as an argument. The Lord would bind Peter to follow Him. He does

not show him much of the way. The path was shrouded in darkness. He knew only the path was long. Not till old age should he die. It must be difficult and dangerous, but all the difficulties and dangers were still shrouded in deep mystery. One thing alone stood out clear. There was a cross at the end. He saw himself bound to it. Not Christ's cross this, but his own. "This He spake, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, Follow Me." A strange argument, was it not? St. Peter had once before asked, "Lord, we have left all and followed Thee. What shall we have therefore?" Jesus had answered him then, "In this present world a hundred times told all thou hast left, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last." Now He gives him this further reply. "What shall I have therefore?" A life of labour, a death upon the cross. Oh, what a strange argument! It seems hardly logic at all. We stand amazed at it. Yet it was just the thing for Peter's case. It was his special privilege to follow Jesus this way, and no other way.

Our Lord had a wonderful power of establishing special links of sympathy with individual followers.

May we not say, He has it still? That is a great secret of all successful work, to get into touch heart with heart. And love is very daring in such things. It does not shrink from the severest tests. Love is privileged to utter the strongest rebukes and ask the greatest sacrifices. The arguments by which our Saviour asserted His paramount sway over the hearts of His nearest followers were not arguments the world could understand. For love has logic of its own, remaining a sealed book for ever to every selfish eye. Our Lord established a special link with St. Paul. How did He do it? Not by the rapture of paradise, but by the thorn in the flesh. “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore,” continues the Apostle, “will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

You see, the revelation won through suffering surpassed in power all the rest. When Jesus leaned from the glory to whisper this in the Apostle's ear, He

took him, as it were, with the other three into the garden of Gethsemane. The others slept. But Paul was wide awake. He learnt to know more perhaps of that hour of Christ's suffering than any man. Christ had a strong temptation in the flesh, the shrinking of His frail humanity from the tremendous burden of a whole world's woe; it crushed Him to the earth in unimagined suffering. Christ too had thrice besought the Lord to take away the trial. Christ too had found the strength supplied Him, and not the burden removed. The sympathy between them in all this was complete, and Jesus told him, "That is enough for thee." "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. Every one that is perfect shall be as his Master." "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." And the Apostle responds to this appeal. "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake : for when I am weak, then am I strong." "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, that I may know Him and

the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death."

Our Lord had also special links of sympathy with St. John. The precious charge of the protection and support of the Lord's mother was given to him. Mary had from the earliest childhood of Jesus kept His sayings and pondered them in her heart. St. John's views and thoughts of our Lord's character were no doubt deeply tinged and coloured by what he learned from tender intercourse and companionship with her whom all generations shall call blessed. The necessity of discharging this trust as a primary duty gave him that scope and opportunity for quiet meditation and thought which was so needful for the benefit of unborn generations and so difficult for one of his ardent nature to attain without special help in that age of tremendous conflict and stir, and then the actual character of those thoughts must have been greatly influenced by intercourse with her. St. John's work was to be a work of waiting for Christ to reveal Himself in glorious apocalypse, and his lot was graciously cast with her who had lived in closest intercourse with Christ in all His years of quiet waiting for His work. What better discipline in unostentatious and quiet endurance could he have?

St. John, too, knew something, nay rather knew very much, of this strange logic of love demanding sacrifice rather than heaping rewards. He with his brother James had asked for a great reward : to sit one on the right hand of Christ, the other on His left hand, in glory. Christ answered, " Ye know not what ye ask. Can ye indeed drink of the cup that I drink of ? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with ? They say unto Him, We can. Jesus said to them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of, and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized : but to sit on My right hand and on My left hand is not Mine to give ; but it shall be given to those for whom it is prepared by My Father." A strange reply by which to weld His followers closer to Himself, curious logic, is it not ? " The sufferings I promise you ; the glory is not Mine to give. I make no promises there. It goes not by such rules." Yet St. John so loved Jesus that all through his life he was content to suffer, waiting for light on that dark saying of Christ's. He did not wait in vain. What he asked for at first, not knowing what he asked, was a solid throne of corruptible gold, the place of honour next Christ in some grand visible kingdom established on the earth. The wish to be close to Jesus was most right. The wish to be closest

and so keep others away was selfish and wrong. That lesson could only be learnt by degrees. St. John when already quite an old man could only say, "This is the confidence we have in Him: that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us, and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him."

Not till the very close of his days, more than half a century after his prayer was uttered—and what a period, if we consider not only the number of years, but also the number and importance of events—not till then, in the lonely island of Patmos, did the true answer from Jesus come at last: "To him that overcometh will I give to sit with Me on My throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father on His throne." St. John had ere this learned the requisite pre-knowledge; he had no further desire to keep others more distant from Jesus than Himself. Writing to outcast Gentiles, he could say, "I am your brother and your fellow-sharer in the kingdom and in the patience of Jesus Christ." And now more, far more, than he asked is given, not a throne of gold beside his Lord on earth, a throne which would keep his brother-Apostles further away, but a seat with Christ on His own and His Father's throne in heaven, a seat in which, as at

that last supper on earth, he could recline his head upon the Saviour's breast, and yet in no mere selfish isolation of felicity; the joy was not for him alone, but for all those countless myriads, redeemed from the earth, who shared his patience and his faith. Surely it was well worth while waiting long to get so glorious an answer at the last. St. John, whose work was to wait, was tried by this special discipline of quiet, enduring waiting upon God.

St. Peter, too, had his especial discipline exactly fitted to his case. Our Lord passed through the whole of His ministry on earth with the full knowledge and consciousness of what was to be at the end—the shameful death upon the Cross. St. Peter could not understand it then. His failure in this respect was really the cause of all his sharpest rebukes and all his most distressing shortcomings and falls. His reward now he was restored again should be to learn the very lesson that he had failed to understand, to go through the whole of his own toilsome life with a cross full in view at the close. It was a very distinct, a very special, training. No other shared it with him. It must have been a wonderful link and bond between the Saviour and himself. We may regard it as teaching him the lesson he once had failed to learn. Or we may look at

it another way. It was a kindness to Peter. It was to give him an opportunity—the very opportunity he longed for—of redeeming a broken promise, regaining a lost character. In his patience he should win back his soul. He had said, "Lord, with Thee I am ready to go to prison and to death," and then he had failed utterly: denied his Master with cursing and oaths. Our Saviour comes back to him yet again, and says to him once more, "Follow Me." Upon that fatal night He had said, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." "Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow Me hereafter." And now He comes back, and says again, "Follow Me." "Follow Me first to prison—one Easter-tide, the very anniversary of Mine arrest—and then to death, the shameful death of the cross, the very death that I died." The record of the one is preserved in the twelfth chapter of the Acts; the prophecy of the other (to the writer it was already a retrospect) preserved in this last chapter of St. John. These words of Christ made a deep impression upon St. Peter himself. In his second letter he refers back to them—"Knowing that I must shortly put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." The words might be more exactly rendered, "Knowing

that the putting off of this my tabernacle is sudden, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me—"Knowing," that is, "that my life will be cut suddenly short by this cruel death." But as the Lord Himself had said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," so St. Peter felt that the putting off of his tabernacle would only minister entrance abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of Christ his Lord.

Now there are some people who are unwilling to follow Christ unless their reason is altogether satisfied in all respects. They pride themselves on their superiority. They look at the service of Christ in the dry light of intellect. "What shall we gain by it? What shall we have therefore?" They fancy that this is a proof of wisdom, a very exalted position to assume. They boast of their freedom from all misleading emotions. Nothing but abstract reason can satisfy them.

Well, God does not refuse to argue with men, but it is worth while noticing with whom He holds His controversies; it is not with the highest, the noblest, the best; to them He issues commands in tones of authority, and they know by a holy instinct that His service is to reign; but when the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, then is the time for God to condescend to arguments. "Come now, let us reason

together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” It is far less apparently logical, but much more noble, to work for the Lord, trusting His word, “Whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive,” than to strike up a bargain to work for a penny a day. And St. Paul expresses this highest logic of love when he says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Other masters have won followers by holding out promises of great rewards ; it is the crowning, peculiar glory of Christ that He can attract hearts to Himself by promises of suffering, make pain itself the greatest of blessings, and ignominious death the highest privilege. “This He said unto him, signifying by what death he should glorify God ; and when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, Follow Me.” “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” Others have called adherents to their thrones ; Jesus alone can rally His followers around His shameful Cross.

CHAPTER XI.

ST. PETER'S FIRST GREAT SERMON.

A SERMON which by the blessing of God changed the whole current of three thousand human lives would certainly on that account demand the attention of all—and they are very many—who are at all interested in preachers and preaching. Moreover, this sermon of Peter's has an especial interest, as being the very first example of apostolic eloquence. It seems designed as a sort of model sermon for preachers of all time. In that light let us look at it; at least, at a few points connected with it. Two things are worthy of attention in every sermon worth attending to in any way,—what is said, and how it is said. Not merely the matter but also the manner as well. Some have gone so far as to state that it is comparatively of small importance what you say—a well-delivered platitude is better than the profoundest thought indifferently expressed. And with this to some extent agrees the well-known

saying of Demosthenes—that Action, Action, Action were the first, second, and third requisites in telling oratory.

The preacher has not merely to know the truth and speak the truth, but somehow or other to contrive to make the truth impressive, to waken interest in what he has to say. Manner is very important in this. The Bible in no way despises it. It notices how preachers spoke. What pictures it gives us of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth, first giving forth His text, and fixing every eye upon Him before He began to utter the striking words of that first sermon of His; or, again, of the wonderful pulpit He chose in Peter's ship. Or, again, how it describes SS. Paul and Barnabas tearing their clothes and springing in amongst the sacrificing Lystrians, or Paul on the castle steps eagerly shaking down with his hand the raging multitude, first by his manner securing a great silence, and then retaining the attention of his infuriated auditors by speaking to them in the Hebrew tongue. The Bible condescends to little things. It by no means despises matters of mere impression. The original Greek which describes to us how Peter began to speak marks plainly three several points,—he stood up manfully; he spoke out loudly; and he was clear in his speech (*ἀπεφθέγγετο*). A bold

commanding presence, not merely loudness but also clearness of speech. These were the outward means by which St. Peter arrested the eye and ear of that vast discordant multitude. His words rang out trumpet-toned above the din, and men were compelled to listen whether they would or no.

The first thing that strikes us about the sermon itself is its bold tone of confident authority. St. Peter speaks as one who knows. He is not feeling and groping after opinions. He is propounding and stating clear definite facts. There is no mist, no haze, and no obscurity. That crowd is all divided and perplexed; St. Peter is ready and prompt to meet the difficulty. He speaks with the confident tone of one who has something to say, and not of one who is looking for what to say, while he is making his speech. The second thing that strikes us is his extreme persuasiveness. There is always persuasiveness in strong personal assurance. Men find it a great deal of trouble to make up their own minds about anything, and so they are always ready to save themselves this by clustering round any one whose own mind is thoroughly made up, and who will do their thinking for them. But St. Peter's persuasiveness is more than this. His sermon deals with knowledge (*γνῶσις*), the recognition

of truth. He does not merely say, "I know," "I recognise" in this the hand of God. He begins, "Men of Judah, and all that dwell in Jerusalem, be it known unto you." He ends, "Infallibly thus then let all the house of Israel *know*." It is not enough for Peter to be delivered of his message, to be a voice in the wilderness. He trembles, so to speak, with eagerness to see his words carried home, effecting a lodgment in hearts and minds. He longs not merely to be delivered of his message, he longs with a magnetic yearning that almost carries its own assurance of success—he longs to be understood.

There is something specially touching about these words "Be it known unto you." We read them most likely many times, and pass them as nothing at all; but think for a moment of Peter's history. Think of the situation then. This was St. Peter's first appearance in public since Jesus suffered. What were the last words of his uttered in hearing of some at least, perhaps not a few, of those who were then in the crowd? Thrice over he had repeated "I know not." Now he begins and now he ends with "I know," or rather, not content with that mere retractation, he earnestly, longingly pleads, "Be it known unto you." We are reminded of the words, "Thou, when thou art con-

verted, strengthen thy brethren." The gift of the Spirit did not make Peter unpractical. Some people seem to think that must be the effect of all religious fervour and zeal. In their eyes the cold, cynical, calculating man of the world is the only practical man. But surely the special work of the Spirit is this—to give a right judgment in all things. And if St. Peter was thoroughly possessed with this great craving to persuade, he set about the work in a very practical way.

He shows sympathy with those to whom he has to speak. He understands their questionings and thoughts. Although his heart is full of the thought of Jesus, he does not begin with stating unpalatable truths. He takes the people as they are, and leads them on to higher things. The crowd were divided in heart. The more part utterly perplexed,—nearly persuaded that this was not drunkenness, but wavering and doubting because they had no other explanation of their own; and the man who has a theory of his own is always at an advantage compared with one who has none. Decisively, with perfect temper, and yet with just that tinge of humour that commands and attracts sympathy without descending to the use of biting sarcasm, he silences for ever the cavils of the noisy few; and then proceeds to state his own case, to furnish the rest with

the theory, or rather with the truth, of which they were in need.

He does this in a way most calculated to arouse interest. He takes his hearers at once to the prophet Joel. He tells them boldly, "His words are being fulfilled this very day before your eyes." This was the truth ; but it was also the truth stated in the way most to impress a Jewish audience. A quotation from the prophet Joel would be so far more interesting to them than to an English audience ; the announcement that they were actual eye-witnesses of its fulfilment would be well-pleasing to their self-esteem. He might have begun so many other ways equally true but far less persuasive. Suppose, for instance, he had begun with what surely, from his own point of view, was then the uppermost thought—"Jesus, Whom you crucified, has sent forth His Holy Spirit which He promised us from heaven, and for which we have been waiting and praying these last ten days." Would they have listened ? I trow not.

And whence did Peter obtain this very special wisdom ? He had a model in Christ. Are we not strongly reminded of that first sermon of Jesus at Nazareth ? The text from the prophet solemnly read, and then the simple and sufficient comment, "This

day is the saying fulfilled in your ears." The people, we are told, marvelled at the gracious words which proceeded out of his lips ; and not till after that did our Lord proceed to tell them unpalatable truths. St. Peter here had learnt his Master's art. He begins with, "This is that which is written in the prophet Joel." Not till the end does he speak of "Jesus, Whom ye crucified."

The scene was left as a sufficient comment upon the prophecy. But in the prophecy itself were words which must have carried back the thoughts of very many to earlier scenes. It was but seven weeks since the last great feast, the Passover. The recollection of that festival was still fresh in their minds ; for many were now for the first time again in Jerusalem since that great day. When these listened to words about signs in the heaven above—and remember how the Jews were always seeking from Jesus a sign from heaven—and when they heard the still further words, "The sun shall be turned into darkness before the great and notable day of the Lord come," their thoughts must have been carried back to that great day, seven weeks before, when three crosses had been raised upon Mount Calvary, and on the centre cross hung one called Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, "and from the sixth hour there was a dark-

ness over the whole land until the ninth hour." They must have thought of Jesus. The way was prepared for Peter to speak of Him. He loses not one moment in doing so.

Men of Israel, hear these words, "Jesus of Nazareth." He gives a rapid *résumé* of the events well known to them, every word of it telling and strong; as yet he does not emphasize, but rather, so far as truth will allow, he palliates their guilt; the points on which he lays stress are two,—the whole was foreseen and fore-determined by God Himself; the actual infliction of the punishment was by the hands of Gentiles, not of Jews (see R. V.); and thus he leads them up to the great new strange fact to them, the fact of the Resurrection.

At once he clinches this great truth with a quotation from the Book of Psalms, applying the words to Jesus,—an utterly new interpretation to their minds.

They listened with some patience to the words of David, but once the quotation was over, the next words of St. Peter seem to imply some signs of rising wonder and incredulity. Prompt to detect the feelings of his audience, he meets them with undaunted energy and with inspired tact. Opposition only calls forth more warmly his eager, longing love. He had addressed them

first as Jews. Then he had turned to them as men of Israel, the privileged of God. And now with ever-growing energy, just as their opposition is arising, with the soft answer that turns away wrath he gently appeals to them as "brothers." "Brethren, let me freely speak to you about the patriarch David." You will not hear of Jesus; in speaking of David at least we are on common ground. All own him for a prophet, all know his tomb. St. Peter once more has got his hearers with him.

David died and was buried, his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

Jesus died and was buried, and what about His sepulchre? Is it lawful as freely to speak about that? We know what the Pharisees said: "His disciples came by night and stole Him away." That lie had had possession for seven weeks. Now it is publicly challenged for the first time. The rulers must have winced. Their story had so much inherent weakness in it, it only could gain ground in absence of another more satisfactory. Mr. Eugene Stock, in his "Lessons on the Life of Our Lord," puts the matter tersely and well in one of his notes:—

1. How impossible that the timid disciples should attempt to break into a sepulchre so well secured.

2. How impossible that, if they did, they should succeed.

For 3. How unlikely that any of the soldiers should be asleep.

4. How much more unlikely that all should be.

5. How was it even then that none were awakened by the heavy motion of the stone ?

6. If not, how could they know who did it ?

7. If the apostles did do this wondrous deed, why were they not prosecuted for it ? ”

So far Mr. Stock. In brief, it was plain that the matter had been hushed up, and Peter perhaps hints as much when he says, We are allowed to speak out freely of David's tomb. The rulers cannot interfere with this plain argument from prophecy, this abstract argument about the Christ that was to be. The dead and buried David prophesied that the promised Messiah should rise from the dead, and sit upon the throne for evermore. The first quotation, from the 16th Psalm, is now fortified by another from the 132nd Psalm. The whole passage is worthy to be quoted as throwing light upon the argument.

“ The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David ; He will not turn from it ; of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep My cove-

nant and My testimony that I shall teach them, their children also shall sit upon thy throne for evermore. For the Lord hath chosen Zion ; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest for ever : here will I dwell ; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision. I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There will I make the horn of David to bud : I have ordained a lamp for Mine Anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame, but upon Himself shall His crown flourish."

The Psalms were so thoroughly familiar to Jewish hearers that the thoughts of many must have been carried on unconsciously to these last words, and in the flame-crowned heads of the disciples of Jesus they had a striking comment.

David declared the Christ should rise. And we are witnesses that this Jesus has risen. What a thrill must have passed through the crowd, when he boldly declared the news "whereof we all are witnesses." The witness of the soldiers was negative at best. "They stole Him *while we slept*." The witness, the living personal experience of all the disciples, is definite and clear. There is the twofold witness of experience. We witness He has risen. You witness what He has

sent; what He has sent from heaven; for He is there, exalted at God's right hand. Here again you may have the authority, the recognised authority of David for what I say.

For David ascended not into the heavens, but he saith himself, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on My right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool."

The thought of the last quotation is here carried on, "His enemies will I clothe with shame, but upon Himself shall His crown flourish."

This was the final argument. The words are those of Christ Himself. Not much more than seven weeks before, in that very city, Jesus had put the question, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? They say unto Him, The Son of David. How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on My right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call Him Lord, how is He then his son? And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions."

The question was not answered then, and still the argument is found unanswerable except on the one supposition that the Christ was to reign not merely on earth but in heaven. This Christ, he says, for a

certain fact, which you do well to know, is Jesus whom *ye* crucified.

The fine comment of Bengel on this short, telling application is well known,—“*Aculeus in fine.*” The sting of the discourse is at its close. But we must remember that this was not a set pulpit discourse, with a formal peroration. Thus far St. Peter went, and there the people broke down and cried with eager enquiries which needed another kind of answer, “What shall we do?” St. Peter was not taken in the least aback. He had his answer ready. How many modern preachers would be as ready with their answer if one should really cry out, “What shall I do?” and yet it is surely the aim of all true preaching first to awaken that question “What shall I do?” and then to have the answer ready for it.

Try this sermon by any test you will, it stands the test,—Authoritative, sympathetic, argumentative, doctrinal, scriptural, experimental, practical. It is from first to last a preaching of Jesus. The sermon has three divisions: the first reflects the teaching of Jesus at Nazareth at the beginning of His ministry, the last reflects the teaching of Jesus in the Temple before His death. The central division is but a narrative of Jesus’ life. The whole leads up from the refutation of a silly

cavil of those who said that the Christians were drunk, to a grand assertion of the Eternal Sovereignty of Jesus over all cavillers and every foe. The Apostle brings out from his treasure things new and old, interpreting the ancient oracles in all their bearings on present circumstance. The whole of the man—mind, heart, and will—is gathered up in his words; a mind stored full of truth, a heart all aglow with love, a will intent on victory, determined to persuade. The more we examine the sermon the more we are filled with wonder, both at its depth, its fulness, and its simplicity. We have treated it as man's utterance, and so it was. But our wonder grows and grows when we think of this as the unpremeditated sermon of a simple fisherman. It grows and grows until we remember that Peter had waited ten days in ceaseless prayer, and Christ had at last fulfilled His own promise:—"It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you."

The mighty rushing wind, the visible tongues of fire, were proof positive that now the Spirit had come. Perhaps the greatest proof of all was Peter's words.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MIRACLES OF ST. PETER.

ST. PAUL occupies a larger space in the New Testament than St. Peter. He has left us fourteen letters (including that to the Hebrews) as against Peter's two ; and far the larger part of the Acts is taken up with his work. But, on the other hand, St. Paul's work stands much more isolated than St. Peter's ; it forms, as it were, a chapter by itself, whereas the work and character of St. Peter run through the whole New Testament, and form a golden thread binding together every part of it : the Gospels to the Acts, the Acts to the Epistles, and (may we not even say, when we remember what St. Peter says of prophecy ?) the Epistles to the Apocalypse, which forms a sort of commentary on his second letter. So he who would treat the hidden harmonies of Scripture with regard to this Apostle has a wider and more indefinite, though in some ways an even more interesting, study than in the case of Paul.

In the case of St. Paul we have two things to

compare : his history as told us in the Acts, and his letters, addressed for the most part to those mentioned in that history ; but we read little of St. Paul's early training. That little is stated in mere generalities. In St. Peter's case we have three things to compare : his early training under Christ Himself ; his early Apostolic history as told us in the Acts ; his letters, written at a much later date to a set of Christians totally distinct. Thus we shall expect to find far fewer outward coincidences of circumstance and fact, but at the same time we have a still wider field for the most subtle of all kinds of evidential study, close mental analysis, and it is not enough to confine ourselves to the places where St. Peter is mentioned by name. We must remember acts of our Lord which he saw, words of our Lord to which he listened, and the constant influence of close companionship, showing itself indirectly in a variety of ways.

I propose in the present paper briefly to take some of the recorded miracles of St. Peter and compare them on the one hand with those of our Lord and on the other with those of St. Paul. The study will, I think, be not an uninteresting one. The miracles run on very parallel lines, but in their manner those of St. Paul show, if I may be allowed the phrase, more of origin-

ality ; those of St. Peter adhere more closely to the old Gospel type, the manner of healing of Jesus Christ Himself. Of course, when we consider the antecedents of the men, this is but natural, the very thing we should be led to expect.

I. ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA STRUCK DEAD ; ELYMAS STRUCK BLIND.

St. Paul's earliest-recorded miracle and almost the earliest of St. Peter were acts of severity. The death of Ananias and Sapphira stands in some sort of correspondence with the blinding of Elymas the sorcerer, though their fate is without strict parallel at all in the New Testament. It reminds us rather of such Old Testament stories as the death of Nadab and Abihu, the breach of Uzzah, the slaughter of the children who mocked Elisha, or the fiery death of the would-be captors of his master, Elijah. It is a striking testimony to the essential harmony of the old and new covenants as well as to the deep depravity of the human heart that almost the first great exercise of Apostolic power in the Church should be such an awful manifestation of God's wrath against sin. What a rebuke to Antinomianism !

But still it may be doubted how far Peter's act was,

properly speaking, the miraculous infliction of capital punishment by him, which it is usually taken to be. There is not a word to show that Peter expected Ananias' death, and in the case of Sapphira his words may be rather a prophecy of a speedy judgment, than an actual infliction of it by his own motive and will. He might infer that as Sapphira was equally guilty, and God no respecter of persons, her punishment would not be less. The stroke at least came straight from God Himself. No Old Testament judgment is equally solemn, for in none is there such entire absence of outward means. No earth opens her mouth ; no fire falls. A man of God utters a word of rebuke, and in a moment man and wife successively drop dead. Yet where such swift penalty comes close on the heels of such stern exposure of sin, it is impossible not to extend to the Apostle himself something of that awe which more properly belongs to God the Holy Spirit, Who was the prime agent, whilst the Apostle was but the instrument through which He wrought. Certainly the effect throughout the Church would be most largely to increase St. Peter's influence.

But now let us inquire whether there be not anything in his previous history to prepare him for this strange experience.

Our Lord all through His ministry waged one ceaseless war with hypocrisy. Over and over again He said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."

This training could not have been lost upon St. Peter: the most recent events would have impressed it more strongly than ever upon him. Our Lord wrought one miracle of judgment alone. He cursed the barren fig-tree because it bore "only leaves." The curse, you notice, was directed against this very thing—hypocrisy. From St. Mark (Peter's interpreter) we learn that the miracle made a special impression upon the Apostle himself. "Peter, calling to remembrance, saith unto Him, Master, Behold, the fig-tree which Thou cursedst is withered away" (St. Mark xi. 21). From St. Matthew we learn that the thing which impressed the disciples was the terrible suddenness of this withering. How soon, on the instant, is the fig-tree withered away! In St. Matthew, too, this is directly followed first by parables and questions and then by direct open and scathing denunciations designed to expose the Pharisees as hypocrites, and then in very few days by the

fearful end of Judas, the arch-hypocrite. Remember that Judas had been Peter's fellow-Apostle, and that the impression made by his death must have been all the deeper when Peter thought how nearly he too had been overwhelmed. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was the very sin of Judas,—hypocrisy and covetousness. Moreover, these were the two great besetting national sins, most generally dangerous, most fatally ruinous, to all the Jewish race, and so of course to the Church that was gathered out of that race. To strike at these was to aim a blow at the enemy in his stronghold. The whole tendency of Jewish thought and feeling was to rest satisfied in outward form and appearance. The whole essence of Christianity consisted in its being a religion of the inmost heart. Where two or three agree to ask a thing of God, the blessing promised is great; where two or three agree to cheat Him, the curse is correspondingly severe. There fell a fear on all that heard these things. That fear may fall on us now. "Because sentence against an evil-doer is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Search me, O God, and try my heart; prove me, and try my reins; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

But now to turn to St. Paul. His first miracle was one of severity. A judgment like that which the angel inflicted upon the men of Sodom, or Elisha upon the bands of Syrians, fell upon Elymas. Whether, as in the former case, it ended in final ruin, or, as in the latter, in final deliverance, we never may fully know. The words "for a season" would lead us to hope that, as with Paul himself, light, both physical and spiritual, was vouchsafed to him; that he found those to lead him by the hand in more senses than one.

Be this as it may—and God only knows—the character of the infliction is remarkable viewed in the light of Paul's experience. Paul too had once been a mad opposer of truth. Paul had been struck blind. He had been led by the hand into Damascus, had remained three days and nights fasting, and then, when the due season came, Ananias, as God's messenger, laid his hand upon him, and there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight.

We must not forget the contrast between the bigoted Pharisee, breathing out threatenings and cursing, and the dishonest sorcerer, full of all craftiness and trickiness. But still the parallel is curious. We can only say with regard to these two acts of judgment,

that each is in marked keeping with the antecedents and character of him who was God's chosen agent in the infliction of the blow.

II. THE HEALING OF AN IMPOTENT MAN.

1. By St. Peter at the Temple gate (Acts iii., iv.).
2. By St. Paul at Lystra (Acts xiv. 8—18).

It is remarkable that the first recorded miracle of St. Peter, who was instructed on his conversion to strengthen his brethren, was quite in accordance with that command, for it was to strengthen the bases * of a man that he first wrought.

There is hardly any other miracle in the New Testament described to us in equal detail, not merely in its actual performance, but in its immediate effects upon the characters and fortunes of all concerned,—the Apostles, the cripple himself, the onlookers, and rulers of the Jews.

The case of the man blind from his mother's womb, related in the ninth chapter of St. John, is perhaps a solitary exception, and it affords some interesting points of comparison. It was an act of education, and prepared St. Peter for this special work. When

* *βασεις*, the very word employed in this place for his feet.

the Apostles saw the man blind from birth, they immediately thought that either he or his parents must have committed some great sin. Our Lord opened their eyes to see the great truth that it is not safe to gauge sin by present suffering; He showed them that suffering ought never to arouse contempt; its end was nobler and higher far: to call forth acts of ministry, to manifest the special grace and glory of the Most High. Henceforth the disciples must have looked with very different eyes on all that great class of loathsome Oriental beggars. Each was regarded with truer, more human sympathy. "Is this man also a theatre for the display of God's special power? Am I to be the agent in that display?"

Again, the first miracle had its influence in preparing both people and rulers to receive the second. The people were much readier to believe the second miracle. Some two thousand proclaimed their conviction at once by ranging themselves upon St. Peter's side and being enrolled in the Church. No doubt the thorough testing of the former sign prepared them in some degree for this.

The effect on the rulers was just the opposite. They were only hardened in their resistance and sin. But still there was a marked difference, a change of front.

On the former occasion they tried to throw discredit on the miracle. They tried, and signally failed. They brought discredit on themselves alone. Now they have had enough of that. They dare not try it again. They scrupulously avoid putting any question whatsoever to the man; they cautiously forbear to enter on any argument. They fall back at once on mere authority and sheer brute force. Their bewilderment is well expressed: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell at Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (Acts iv. 13—18).

Peter and John were bold laymen. They had been

worsted in argument with such a layman once before. Their dignity was ruffled by that experience. They would not try it again. They recognised the same spirit here as in the blind man of John ix. They recognised that these men had been in Jesus' company. There was something irrepressible about that Man's followers. Thank God, there always is about the truth.

It is very instructive to see how prejudice will override judgment and mental conviction of truth. It would be almost incredible if we did not often find the very same thing in ourselves.

But there was another circumstance which must have added much poignancy and force to this new blow against the priestly faction of Jews, and may have helped to motive St. Peter's act in healing a man that was lame. The last public miracle of Christ had been of this same character and in this very place. I say the last public miracle advisedly, because the cursing of the fig-tree was a sign to the disciples alone; the healing of Malchus' ear was an act of reparation known to a very few, and not to be placed in the same category with other signs. The only other miracle, so far as I am aware, recorded after our Lord's last public entry into Jerusalem, is where the blind and the lame came to Him in the Temple, and

He healed them. St. Matthew alone preserves the circumstance (xxi. 14), but it is very significant.

The context is also striking. When the Pharisees saw the wonderful works that He did and the children crying in the Temple, they were angry, and said, "Hearest thou what these say?" Here was the same attempt at repression meeting the same ill-success. The whole multitude at that time was astonished at Jesus' doctrine. The Pharisees durst not lay a finger upon Him. He said Himself in His defence, "I sat daily teaching in the Temple, and ye laid no hands upon Me." All the people were very attentive to hear Him. The Pharisees had had one day of triumph since. What had they gained by it? Lo, all the people still were most attentive to hear. The work of Jesus laid the train; the miracle of Peter did but set the light to it. What act could be better fitted to reveal the secret questionings of many hearts, to rekindle the slumbering enthusiasm, to reawaken the half-smothered convictions of all that great, fickle multitude? No testimony could more strikingly enforce the abiding character of Jesus' presence and power than the sight of His followers doing the very acts He did upon the very spot where He had stood, and boldly asserting the work as His alone, and none of theirs. Our

Lord had left St. Peter special encouragement for this work. Very few days after He healed those lame folk in the Temple, He told him, "Verily I say unto you, the works that I do ye shall do also, and greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to the Father."

But more than this, again, in the very manner of the deed we seem to catch distinct echoes of our Saviour's example and teaching. First, we have the awakening of faith and expectation before the working of the cure. "Look on us. Silver piece, gold piece, I have not, but what I have, that give I thee." This must have roused the man's curiosity, and thus prepared him for the cure. So used our Lord to work in many ways, sometimes awakening faith by a direct question: "What wilt thou?" sometimes by exhortation: "If thou canst believe;" sometimes by words to onlookers: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe;" sometimes by simple delay provoking importunity. Then we have the firm grasp of the hand raising the lame man up. So had our Lord Himself raised Peter's mother-in-law. And lastly, we have in the very words of Peter the exact echo of those spoken by our Lord to the man with the palsy: "Arise and walk."

When Jesus used these words, He said, "Whether

is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk?" St. Peter simply reverses the order of the words. First he says to the lame man, "Arise and walk." Then, in his speech to him and the others, he says, "Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." In both cases our Lord's authority from God "on earth to forgive" is directly based upon His power "on earth to heal." And I think that the coincidence, however oblique it may seem, can hardly be called fanciful.

But now we pass from Jerusalem to a very different scene, the place so different, the circumstances so alike. In the story of St. Paul at Lystra we have again a great Apostle brought into contact with a man lame from his mother's womb. Here too the cure is brought into close connection with the religious observance of the people. And there is something of likeness in the manner of healing: the same earnest look, the same decisive command. In both cases the people were astonished and ready to attribute the work to the Apostle's own power. But there the resemblance ends. In St. Paul's words, "Stand upright on thy feet," we miss the echo of our Saviour's

tones. And in the circumstances of the miracle there is a marked and pointed contrast between the readiness of the poor heathen priests and the unreadiness of the enlightened Jewish hierarchy to own the work as something truly Divine. The pagan worship sharply condemns the Jewish unbelief.

III.—THE RAISING OF TABITHA (Acts ix. 36), AND
OF EUTYCHUS (Acts xx. 7).

The raising of Tabitha is in many points closely parallel to the raising of Jairus' daughter by Christ. St. Peter was one of the privileged three admitted to witness that act of power. When he was summoned under like circumstances and for a like emergency, his thoughts must have recurred to that other day, or if we may not speculate on an Apostle's thoughts, his manner of setting to work at least distinctly reminds us of that other day. In both cases the worker of the cure was summoned in hot haste from a distance, distinctly appealed to for help. In both cases the house was found preoccupied by a throng of unquiet mourners. In the one, no doubt, the grief was truly genuine; in the other it was perfunctory and hired. But the somewhat fussy demonstrations of the well-meaning women were nearly as much out of

keeping with the work of St. Peter as the scornful laughter of the paid mourners was out of keeping with the work of Christ. Our Lord put forth the scornful mourners and flute-players; St. Peter put forth the worthy importunate widows, with their display of needlework. Both needed quietude for what they were to do. And then St. Peter kneeled down and prayed, and turning to the body, said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive." With this compare St. Luke viii. 54, 55: "And He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and said, Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway, and He commanded to give her meat."

We see at once the two accounts run parallel. The chief difference is that something more of effort seems to be required where a mere man is allowed to woo back life to one dead. Peter kneeled down and prayed before he did the work, and then the life came back by degrees. First she opened her eyes, and then he grasped her by the hand, and so the tide flowed back again in its fulness and strength. So, too, in the Old Testament, strong effort was required both by

Elijah and Elisha in winning back the life to those they raised. The works in the Acts would seem to occupy a middle place in this respect between the Old Testament miracles and those of the Saviour Himself. There must be a difference between the Master and the servant, between Him Who has life in Himself and one whose life is all derived from without. Allowing for this, surely the stories run as parallel as possible. In one respect St. Mark brings the resemblance into yet clearer light. St. Mark alone records the very words of the Saviour, "Talitha cumi;" and surely the echo of those words was in St. Peter's ears when he turned to that other body and cried, "Tabitha cumi," or "Tabitha, arise."

Now if we look to St. Paul's one resurrection miracle, the raising of Eutychus, we see he acted more after the fashion of one of the older prophets, with whose story he was familiar from a boy, for he went down and fell on him, and embraced him, and said, "Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him" (Acts xx. 10).

Surely this is just what we should expect. St. Peter, suddenly called on, acts as our Lord Himself had taught him: St. Paul in a kindred emergency, not having seen the miracles of Christ, falls back on the stories

which had excited his boyish wonderment; the power is Divine in either case, but it works its way in the path of the least resistance by natural human laws of association and memory. This is unconscious evidence of truth.

CHAPTER XIII.

ST. PETER AND CORNELIUS.

“Unheard by all but angel ears
The good Cornelius knelt alone,
Nor dreamed his prayers and tears
Would help a world undone.

“The while upon his terraced roof,
The loved apostle to his Lord
In silent thought aloof
For heavenly vision soared,

“Far o’er the glowing western main
His wistful brow was upward raised,
Where like an angel’s train
The burnished water blazed.

“The saint beside the ocean prayed,
The soldier in his chosen bower,
Where all his eye surveyed
Seemed sacred in that hour.

“To each unknown his brother’s prayer :
Yet brethren true in dearest love
Were they—and now they share
Fraternal joys above.” KEBLE.

THE poem from which these lines are taken is
the most beautiful comment on one of the most
beautiful stories in the New Testament. There is a

dramatic completeness about the whole circumstance ; it is a perfect poem of real life ; full of most striking contrasts and deeper and yet more subtle harmonies.

Contrast the Jew of Joppa and the centurion of Cæsarea ! Contrast St. Peter and Cornelius ! What thoroughly typical men ! Both so manly and yet so different, and yet so united in one. There are those who grumble at the narrative, and say, "Oh, what a waste of miracle, and prodigy !" They would do well to consider first the importance of the crisis, and next the tremendous difficulties, moral and social, to be overcome before these two could share fraternal joys. The occasion was perhaps the most important since the call of Abraham. In *that* the distinction of Gentile and Jew was created, in *this*, having served its purpose, it was again annulled, and in Christ Jesus the middle wall of partition was broken down, the two made one again and peace restored. It is not merely the conversion of a single man ; Cornelius aptly represents a race, a civilization, a great world-empire. Great issues are frequently fought out on very narrow fields. In the conversion of Cornelius we see foreshadowed the conversion of Constantine in the nearer future, and the conversion of India under the soldier sway of Britain in the remoter future still to come. Apart

from the great central facts of Jesus' life on earth, and death, and rising, and ascension, and the great mission of the Comforter, I know of no more important crisis and epoch in the records of religious history.

If Divine interposition may be justified on account of the greatness of the crisis, it certainly may be so by the inadequacy of any ordinary means to break down a rooted and age-long prejudice.

Think of the difficulties of these two men !

There is Cornelius first, a Roman centurion of the Italian band stationed in Cæsarea. We may perhaps compare his position with that of a Percy, or a Cavendish, officer of the guards, stationed at Calcutta or some great leading Indian station. The Roman service was not like the English, permeated and ennobled by a spirit of self-denying Christianity. Yet in spite of the influence of a creed that proclaims most boldly the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man, until very recent days it was quite common, and even now I believe it is not unknown, for men in that position to speak of natives with utter contempt as "niggers." The contempt of the Roman for the provincial was often even more pronounced.

Cornelius. The name brings back many memories of Rome's noblest exploits and Rome's most powerful

sons. The great Scipio, the Wellington of Roman history, was a Cornelius. The mother of the two great agrarian reformers, Tiberius and Caius Gracchus, was named Cornelia; and the powerful Sulla, the great reviver of aristocratic privilege at Rome, boasted the same proud name. Of course the bearing of the name Cornelius is not conclusive as to the high birth and illustrious descent of this centurion, because the freedmen of great nobles assumed their names; yet being an officer of such a company, a picked regiment, it is quite possible his rank and position were high. At least the name connects him with much of Roman worth. He was a centurion. The great instrument of Roman conquest was, of course, the wonderful Roman army—and of that army the regimental officer, the centurion, was the finest and fittest representative, the backbone of the service. One can well imagine that the old hereditary traditional Roman virtues lingered longest and most tenaciously amongst this class.

It is very remarkable that while several centurions are mentioned in the New Testament, in almost every instant something distinctly favourable is told us of their character. The manly faith of the centurion at Capernaum is well-known to all—Jesus Himself admired him. I know not if there be another man

of whom the same thing is distinctly said. If John is the disciple whom Jesus loved, that brave captain stands out in almost equal prominence as the man whom Jesus admired. Again the centurion whose duty led him to watch by the cross of Christ, was the very first to exclaim, "Truly this man was the Son of God." A centurion saved St. Paul from a cruel scourging. A centurion, Julius by name, treated him very courteously on his great voyage to Rome. Last but not least we have this man Cornelius. The gospel of peace in this way extends its warm and hearty recognition to the profession of arms. St. Paul the great Apostle of the Gentiles was much thrown in contact with soldiers, and very fond of them. St. Peter's first convert from the Gentiles was a Roman military officer: and thank God there have never been wanting in the Church of Christ, brave manly soldiers, as true to the standard of Christ crucified, as to that of their earthly ruler or king.

The place too where Cornelius was stationed is not without its interest and its significance. Cæsarea Stratonis, or Sebaste was the political, just as Jerusalem was the religious capital of Palestine. There was the ordinary residence of the governor; and there were the head-quarters of the Roman army. The

town was a splendid creation, but of perfectly modern workmanship, a monument of the magnificence of Herod the Great, who built it in ten years and dedicated it to his imperial patron at Rome. There was a magnificent harbour protected by a vast artificial mole. Western ideas and Western civilization predominated. The population was more than half Gentile; Greek the prevailing language. There was a great amphitheatre, and huge temple of the heathen god Jupiter.

The point to notice is this: it must have been a tremendous sacrifice for one in the position of Cornelius manfully to own allegiance to the God of Abraham. He was one of a conquering class in a conquering race. All Romans despised provincials as such—they had hardly any rights—they were trampled and trodden down and broken in pieces beneath the iron heel of a victorious oppressor. Of all provincials Jews were the most despised. They were looked down on as a superstitious, misanthropic, rebellious and troublesome race, the natural enemies of all mankind.

For a Roman officer of position to forego the religious observance of his ancestors, and accept as his own the God of the conquered and hated Jew, was the surest way to bring upon himself both odium, reproach and ridicule. Cornelius had doubtless much to bear

from his comrades and fellow-officers. Worse than that, he had little sympathy from those to whose religion he had attached himself. His pride of race was brought face to face with a yet more obstinate pride, a pride both of race and of creed. In Jewish eyes he was still but a dog of a Gentile—a man of suspected position—and though he might receive some favour and some flattery—it was a condescending attention. His prayers, his piety, his alms, were all very right and well, but they could never raise him to the level of Jewish privilege. They looked upon him askance as but a half-tamed monster still. It needed very great faith on the part of the centurion to conquer the natural disgust he must have felt at the pretentious arrogance of Pharisaic pride.

Remember the words of the Jews to Christ about that other centurion, to whom they felt as warmly as they were capable of feeling. "He is worthy for whom Thou shouldest do this, for he loveth our nation, and himself built us the synagogue." His title to favour with Christ is not his manliness, his kindness, his courage or his faith, but simply the benefits he gave to Jews as Jews.

The Jew in dealing with the centurion, however well he was intentioned, could not avoid an air of

patronage—and for a Roman centurion to be patronized by a Jewish scribe! how galling and how trying to human flesh and blood!

The position in which Cornelius found himself was not merely a trying position, it was a very lonely one. It speaks much for the robustness of his faith, that this absence of human sympathy and help drove him the more to seek his help from God. The difficulties of Cornelius were personal and social and of the gravest kind. He saw his old gods were false. He saw the God of Israel was true; but could the God of Israel ever be his own God, so long as he stayed a Roman, or must he fall in with all the proud superstitious observances of his new co-religionists? must he throw up his commission, must he be circumcised and keep the law? At present, though one of the conquering race, and conscious of strength of character and power of will, he was religiously a kind of outcast pariah, contending with a double current of contempt. No form of religion seemed to be left to him but trust and waiting upon God. And yet the energy of his faith was so great, that, standing alone as he would seem to have done, he yet was not left alone, his influence extended round him. He was a born leader, and had his little following of relatives and friends.

The difficulties of St. Peter were almost equally great, perhaps even greater, for who shall rightly, judge? They were, it is true, of quite a different kind. The question with Cornelius was a matter of life and death, of personal religion, of the salvation of his own soul. The personal question with Peter had long ago been fought out. Never since that renewed commission by the Sea of Tiberias had he for one moment wavered in loyal allegiance to Christ and willingness to do and dare for Him. The difficulties of Peter now were those of statesmanship. The burden of his office was weighing heavily on him. Success brings its trouble with it as well as failure. The very progress of Christianity involved the gravest cares. Those scattered in the persecution about Stephen carried the gospel news, and Gentiles heard of it. What should they do? what should their status be? The kingdom of God is taken by violence, the violent take it by force. The idea of accepting a Gentile as such was still entirely new, and yet the difficulties of his accepting Christ on any other terms were becoming daily more and more manifest: it was becoming more plain day by day that the Jews as a whole would not be Christianized, at least not then; it was becoming day by day more plain that Christianity could not continue

as a Jewish sect. The new wine of the gospel, with all its ferment of spiritual life, could never be confined within the dried old skins of Jewish forms. In their perplexity, men naturally turned to the Apostles for advice, and on St. Peter, as acknowledged leader amongst the Twelve, the burden of responsibility would fall with special weight. The raising of Tabitha had called him down to Joppa, and as he lingered there some time, one day he went on the roof of the house to meditate most likely on questions such as these. There on the flat terraced roof the vision came to him. The place in itself was most appropriate, and, if we may so say, typical. If in Cæsarea the West was invading the East, in Joppa the East looked forth towards the West. Joppa, the one natural harbour of Palestine, was as ancient as Cæsarea was new.* It still survives under the well-known name of Jaffa as a town of growing importance, whilst Cæsarea has mouldered into dust. It means the beautiful town. It is mentioned in the Book of Joshua. Hiram sent cedar-trees thither for Solomon. Jonah set sail from it. It was a mark of superiority to Jewish prejudice for Peter to be lodging there in Simon's house. For the trade of a tanner was thought to be unclean.

* Pliny preserves the tradition that it was founded before the flood.

From the roof he would have a boundless prospect over the western waves, whilst the hill on which the town was built shut out the eastern view.

The vision that Peter saw is very interesting. The meeting of the human and Divine, the naturalness so far as possible of God's own revelations of Himself is always noticeable. We can imagine many ways in which God might have declared this great new truth, but we never should have guessed this way. Because he was hungry, St. Peter dreamed about food. It is so simple, so natural, and yet God sent that dream. And then in vision and trance the character of Peter remains unchanged. His threefold protest, "Not so, Lord ;" reminding us so forcibly of other days and other words—"That be far from Thee, Lord ;" "Thou shalt never wash my feet." And then the vision does not carry with it its own interpretation at once. By degrees it dawns upon St. Peter what was meant. The threefold vision connects itself with the three men, and they are lodged and fed without demur, and Peter goes with them.

And then what a wonderful meeting with Cornelius. For that man in presence of all his relations and friends to fall down on his face before a Jewish peasant! Socially speaking, it was as strange as if an English officer were to prostrate himself before some Hindoo

ryot. Where is gone the pride of conquest, the pride of race? Vanished before the touch of Christ.

And then in St. Peter we have forbearance quite as remarkable. Far from being flattered or accepting this strange homage, he meets Cornelius in the frankest, most straightforward way, and "took him up, saying, Stand up! -I myself also am a man." He meets him on the ground of broad humanity. Remember he is the apostle to whom we owe the words, "Honour all men," and here he shows the way. We catch the echo of the Roman dramatist's words: "*Homo sum, nihil humani alienum a me puto*," and this of all things from a Jew. Why, Juvenal tells us they would not even direct a man to a fountain in the street for fear of being defiled. What wonderful power the creed of Jesus has in breaking down inveterate prejudice! And then the words of Peter that follow are so characteristic. There is a frank admission of what but a few days ago he would have thought—the lingering echo of a protest still. It is in character the perfect and complete parallel to those former words, "Master, we have toiled all the night and taken nothing; nevertheless, at Thy word I will let down the net." It is not in Peter's nature to withhold a frank obedience to Christ, nor yet again to cherish a doubt unexpressed.

The answer of Cornelius is full of dignity. A terse, simple, soldierly narrative of facts; whilst the concluding words have the real military ring about them: "Immediately therefore I sent unto thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."

St. Peter's second speech is perhaps most interesting of all. From the human point of view so embarrassed, and one may almost say tentative; from the Divine point of view so exactly what was required. St. Peter, I mean, is plainly taken aback—the utterance is wholly unpremeditated, the very structure of the sentences bears witness to the fact. He begins by stating with all the force of fresh conviction, Cornelius' acceptance with God, quite irrespective of his nationality. That, if I have rightly judged his difficulties, was just the crucial point with him, and St. Peter goes to it straight and sets it for ever at rest. The exact appropriateness of the words is the more remarkable because St. Peter approached the question from just the opposite point of view to that of Cornelius himself. Cornelius was thinking, "Must I demean myself to be a Jew?" and Peter, "Can we demean ourselves to admit Gentiles?" The fact of Cornelius' personal acceptance was made

clear, but nothing as yet beyond. What should the consequence be? what must he therefore do? St. Peter has to deliver God's message to this man. He gives the old, old story, nothing more—with just a remark now and then specially bearing on present circumstance. St. Peter was the apostle of the circumcision, and he preaches to Cornelius exactly the same message, saying at first it was the message with which Jesus, (the Lord of *all*) had charged him to his own people—and saying at last that all the prophets bore witness to Christ, that “through His name *whosoever* believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.” The universality of Christ's redemption is strikingly insisted on; but still to the very last the question of conditions is left untouched. The descent of the Spirit upon Cornelius and his friends just at this time is plainly the thing that solved Peter's perplexity. They have received the Spirit, how can they be refused the water too? “What was I, that I could withstand God?” was his decisive reply to those that questioned him.

What nobler illustration can we find of the parting words of St. Mark—the great interpreter of Peter's mind. “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following?”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TWO PASSOVERS.

“ Touched, he upstarts—his chains unbind—
Through darksome vault, up massy stair
His dizzy doubting footsteps wind
To freedom and cool moonlight air.

“ Then all himself, all joy and calm,
Though for a while his hand forego,
Just as it touched, the martyr’s palm,
He turns him to his task below.

“ The pastoral staff, the keys of heaven,
To wield awhile in grey-haired might ;
Then from his cross to spring forgiven,
And follow Jesus out of sight.”

KEBLE.

THE account of St. Peter’s imprisonment and deliverance, recorded for us in the twelfth of Acts, is so familiar that it would seem to call for little comment. But there is one point which adds a special interest to this account, and which, though plainly stated, is often overlooked. “ Then were the days of unleavened bread,” “ intending *after Easter*, to bring him forth to the people.” It was once more the

passover time. And only fourteen years earlier Christ our Passover had been sacrificed for us. This simple fact gives the material for many thoughts. We have the assertion of St. Peter *then*: "Lord, with Thee I am ready to go to prison and to death;" and *now* he proves his readiness. He really goes to prison. He peacefully sleeps without any terror of death. What a contrast there is between the two occasions, and how suggestive of comforting, consoling thoughts!

Jesus had no sleep the night before He suffered. He passed through all the bitterness of death. Then indeed St. Peter slept, but it was not the sleep of holy confidence; the corruptible body weighed down the spirit of the man. It was the sleep of sorrow, the sleep of sin, the sleep, if Christ had not aroused him and rescued him, the very sleep of death. Peter not able to watch one hour with his Lord, is a spectacle of shame; but Peter bound with the chains, asleep between the soldiers, is a sight in which we may well rejoice.

Jesus *died*. His martyrs *sleep* through Him. So He giveth His beloved sleep. The contrast between what Jesus bore for us and what we are called upon to bear for Him is nowhere more clearly brought into relief. Christ in the garden prayed whilst others slept.

Peter in prison slept quietly whilst others prayed for him.

One cannot help wondering what was the subject of St. Peter's dreams when the light shined in the prison, and the angel smote him on the side and raised him up. Was it at this time he had those revelations preserved to us in his epistle long years afterwards? Was it at this time whilst he meditated over all those old memories of the Passion and Rising of Jesus, that something was revealed of Christ's own work upon the Easter-eve,—how He went by the Spirit and preached to the spirits in prison? The thought seems not unnatural; and though it is a guess, and nothing more, this much at least is evident: that he who tells us of that preaching had himself been a prisoner to whom at the Easter season a spirit came and preached glad tidings of release.

When the disciples gathered praying that first Easter evening, and Jesus appeared in their midst, they thought it was a spirit. The disciples in Mary's house cannot believe the witness of their own ears and Rhoda's eyes about St. Peter, and say "It is his angel," till he himself assures them to the contrary.

An angel at Easter-tide opened the great prison door for Peter to come forth, and an angel on the

Easter morning rolled back the huge stone and showed the tomb of Jesus robbed of its prey. Soldiers guarded Peter, and soldiers guarded the sepulchre of Christ. In each case military precautions of the most elaborate kind were taken to secure a triumph for the foes of Christ, and in each case the precautions were shown to be signally futile and vain.

Again we have two little maids, both keepers of the gate: the nameless one who was the cause of Peter's grievous fall, and Rhoda who welcomed him so gladly on his deliverance from Herod's hands. If Dr. Edersheim's suggestion that the house where the last supper was held was that of St. Mark's father, is correct, Peter returned to the very house from which he had formerly set forth to meet his grievous fall, and found a little portress maid the first to welcome him. Then he had fallen utterly contrary to all his own expectation, and now he knew that God had sent to rescue him from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

In spite of all these subtle and underlying contrasts and harmonies, there is nothing laboured in this account; the narrative as it flows on in its simple graphic style is charmingly natural. The character of the vain, unprincipled monarch Herod, living for

popularity alone, is vividly portrayed in one or two little touches. The picture of Peter half roused from his sleep and having to be instructed in every little detail about his simple preparations is inimitable in its simple truthfulness. And then the surprise of the assembled company to find their prayers were heard ! how faithful a portraiture of human life and character !

But again, this story, in all its beautiful simplicity, tempts us to one yet further comparison. It does not stand alone in the New Testament or in the Acts of the Apostles as the record of a miraculous deliverance from gaol. St. Paul and Silas at Philippi had also their escape. And the points that most strike one in comparing these two records of apostolic rescue are :—First, that in the one case the human and in the other the Divine, or more strictly speaking the angelic element is most prominent in the deliverance ; and secondly, that in the one case the warders were the gainers, and in the other they were slain.

The active, manly heroism of Paul and Silas, who sang praises to God, with their feet in the stocks and their backs all bleeding and sore, who remained calm and collected all through the earthquake, and saved

the gaoler himself from suicide, and who finally brought the town magistrates to humbly apologize for having made a mistake—this active, manly heroism is what impresses us most. In Peter there is the calm of quiet confidence, the peacefulness of restful sleep, and that is all. He is not called upon for active enterprize; he has but to submit to follow where an angel leads.

In the town of Philippi it was above all things needful that Christianity, just born and left in its infancy without apostolic guidance, should have some claim upon heathen respect. It was a great thing for the Christians to know that the gaoler to whose care so many of them were likely, on one pretext or another, to be consigned, was one of their own number, and sure to mitigate their sufferings in every way he could.

It was a great thing for the rulers of the town to have a wholesome dread upon them, to feel that Christians were quite capable within lawful limits of standing up for their rights. They were placed under an obligation to Paul for not pressing his case against them, but they were made perfectly aware that he was fully acquainted how strong his own case was. His conduct commanded respect. The ægis of the majesty

of the Roman Name was spread over the cradle of the infant Church in that proud Roman colony.

In Jerusalem, on the other hand, the brave and manly character of Christians was already a matter of common notoriety. The chief opponents of Christianity were the Sadducees, who declared that there was neither angel nor spirit, and no such thing as rising from the dead. It was very appropriate, therefore, that by the providence of God an angel should take a leading part in Peter's deliverance. It was a blow directly against the very citadel of priestly opposition.

Again it may seem hard that the warders—as we are inclined to say the innocent warders—should pay the penalty of Peter's rescue by the loss of their own lives. And though the reply, that Peter's life was of more value than all of theirs is perfectly true, perhaps it does not satisfy. Might they not all have been saved? It is sufficient to note that the case of the warders in this and in the other story stands on a totally different footing. There is no parallel.

There in Philippi, ignorant heathen were keeping in durance vile those whom they took for vulgar rioters. Here in Jerusalem, the very head-quarters of gospel teaching for fourteen years, the soldiers of Herod were guarding those whom they must have known to be men

of miraculous powers, and more than common holiness. They knew they proclaimed themselves the messengers of God, they knew they attested their claim by working miracles—and if, in spite of all this knowledge, they still determined to aid and abet their royal master in his scheme of daring wickedness—well, we can only say they did it with their eyes open and at their own risk. But perhaps it may be answered, they had no choice about the matter; as soldiers their duty was simply to obey. Yes, but there are limits to the rightful demands even of military discipline. If these men had boldly cast in their lot with Peter, as we read in the accounts of later martyrdoms that many soldiers did—we may be sure that God would either have found the means to rescue them as well, or at least they would have had the honour of dying for the truth and not as its opponents. For a soldier, death on the field is honour and not disgrace, and better, far better it had been for these men to die as soldiers of Christ, than to die to gratify the offended pride of a vain, silly king like Herod, shortly himself to become the prey of devouring worms.

The same argument applies in the Old Testament history. The would-be captors of Elijah were burned with fire, but notice where! most likely on the very

mount where they had seen the fire fall upon the sacrifice, and bowed the knee and cried : "The Lord, He is the God." A striking commentary (is it not ?) upon the words of the inspired writer. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. x. 26, 27). The would-be captors of Elisha were feasted and fed. But *they* were ignorant Gentiles, and their responsibility was correspondingly less.

CHAPTER XV.

ST. PETER'S LIFE AND LETTERS.

IT is always extremely interesting to see a man's character reflected in his works. In the epistles of Peter we have abundant scope for such enquiry. Archdeacon Paley has published a well-known standard work called "*Horæ Paulinæ*," in which the epistles of Paul are compared one by one with the memoirs of that Apostle preserved to us in the Acts. He points out a great number of instances of undesigned agreement between the two sets of documents. The letters were plainly not made up from the history. The history plainly was not made up from the letters, and yet we have the very same St. Paul presented to us in both—the same in character, and, wherever the accounts run parallel, the same in outward circumstance. The agreements traced are often most roundabout and recondite, but none the less convincing on that account. Perhaps no work of Paley's, not even

his well-known "Evidences," is of more value than this as a defence of the truth. Can nothing similar be done in the case of St. Peter's epistles? Yes, there is room for work in this direction too. The agreements here will be of a different character, because we have no details of Peter's later life, and very few directly personal allusions in his letters; but still agreements there are, and any one who will simply take the pains to compare the words of Peter's epistles with the record of his life preserved in the Gospels and the Acts will find a wealth of interest not easy to exhaust.

To follow out this line of thought fully would need a volume at least; I can only hope in a single paper to suggest the path to others (many no doubt have found it already), and leave them to follow it out for themselves. The plan I mean is simply this. The plainest reader can follow it. Take the epistles and read them through, and as you do so keep before your mind these three enquiries.

1st. What trait in Peter's character do these words illustrate?

2nd. What words of the Lord Jesus Christ, uttered in Peter's presence, are echoed here in the Apostle's words?

3rd. What incidents in Peter's life and experience lend special force and point to what he teaches us here ?

I do not think I should do my readers any real good by following out the plan through the whole epistle. Such studies are so much more profitable and interesting when we discover things for ourselves, than when they are pointed out by another, and we are called upon for nothing but an inert assent. I will only note seriatim the points which chiefly struck me in reading the first twelve verses.

I.

“ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”—
1 PETER i. 1, 2.

It is not quite clear in the original Greek to whom the latter part of this sentence applies. Is Peter an apostle according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, etc. ? or are the strangers of the Dispersion elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, etc. ?

If we take the former view, which is certainly

possible, we have a remarkable parallel in the words of Christ:—

“Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father which is in heaven.”

Nor is it out of place to remark how the true apostolic work of St. Peter dates from his receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, “elect in sanctification of the Spirit,” and heartily accepting the Passion and suffering of Christ on his behalf “unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”

The most distinctive and characteristic phrase of the verse is undoubtedly this: “unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood.”

“Obedience of the blood of Jesus Christ,” is more than obedience to Jesus Christ: a much harder thing. From the time St. Peter knew our Lord he was willing to obey Him—witness his letting down the net against his own convictions, in pure reliance upon Jesus’ word—but he was not willing to submit to the necessity of Jesus suffering for him. “That be far from thee, Lord—this shall not be unto Thee.” The lesson of obedience to the blood of Jesus was one that had cost St. Peter dear indeed to learn. It was the crisis and turning point of his life. And is it far-fetched if the other

expression yoked with this—the *sprinkling* of the blood of Jesus—reminds us of another protest of St. Peter: “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me:” “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” “He that is bathed *needeth not save to wash his feet*, but is clean every whit?”

II.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”—I PETER i. 3.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ stands in the forefront of all St. Peter's preaching in the Acts. It stands in the forefront of his epistle here. No one had richer experience of the abundant mercy of God upon the Resurrection Day than Peter himself, and no one more needed a birth and quickening to new hope upon that day. I need not enlarge upon this, because in a separate paper I have already dwelt at some length upon the bearing of the Resurrection Fact upon St. Peter's own life. Hope that had died living again through the Resurrection of Christ exactly illustrates his own experience.

There is, however, another phrase which calls for a short notice; the phrase “begotten us again”—

the word is peculiar to Peter, it is repeated ver. 23 : "*Being born again*, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." In another form it occurs 1 Peter ii. 2 : "As *new-born* babes, desire the sincere milk of the word" (cf. Luke x. 21).* Perhaps St. Peter was not present when our Lord discussed the new birth with Nicodemus. He certainly was present on a later occasion described in St. Mark ix. 33. "And Jesus came to Capernaum : and being in the house He asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way ? But they held their peace : for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And He sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them : and when He had taken him in His arms, He said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name, receiveth Me, and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me."

"The house" in Capernaum was probably Peter's house ; and the child, if not probably, at least very

* ἀναγέννησας . . . ἀναγεγεννημένοι . . . ἀρτιγέννητα.

possibly, Peter's child. The lesson of child-like simplicity inculcated both here and in the following chapter of St. Mark, where we read of Jesus blessing the infants and saying, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein," was not lost upon St. Peter. It bears fruit in this letter of his old age.

III.

"To an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."—

1 PETER i. 4, 5.

Perhaps the passages in the Gospels we are most directly reminded of in these verses are St. Luke xii. 32—44: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also;"—and St. John xiv. 1—3: "Believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and take you to Myself, that where I am there ye may

be also." In the last quotation the double thought, "You are kept for the inheritance, and the inheritance is kept for you," is found in the same short compass, and in the same fulness of reassuring comfort.

IV.

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen ye love; in Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."—I PETER i. 6-10.

We seem to hear in these words an echo of Christ's reaching on the Mount: "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. v. 12). And the expression, "*if need be*" (εἰ δέον ἐστί) "in heaviness; that the trial of your faith might be found unto *glory*," reminds us of the words of Christ, "*Ought not*" (οὐκ ἔδει) "Christ to have suffered these things, and enter into His *glory*?" (Luke xxiv. 26).

The whole passage illustrates in the strongest way a powerful characteristic of St. Peter's mind; the way in which he could project himself into the future, and realize as a substantial thing the brightness of a glory yet to be revealed.

“And when the strife is fierce, the conflict strong,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong—
Alleluia.”

There are those who live in the present wholly, and go plodding on through dark days or bright, staying themselves upon the name of their God. St. Peter's was a warm imagination that sprang forward to a glowing future, and saw every petty detail illuminated by the brilliant glory of an assured Beyond. He speaks of the final salvation as even now “ready to be revealed.” He exhorts his hearers to exult already in that last great crisis, so near at hand; to receive the end of their faith, the salvation of souls. The same ardour which made him descend from the ship to meet the Lord on the water—which made him fling himself into the sea to come to Christ on the shore—which made him enter the tomb while John was content to linger without—appears in his teaching here, chastened and disciplined with the thought fully grasped of the necessity of suffering and trial here for a little while. Once he would have had the glory without the suffering, now he has learnt that the pains will only enhance the brightness of the gains. But still that brightness is ever sparkling before his eyes, enkindling his highest enthusiasm, awakening and in-

spiring his holiest hopefulness. Oh, what a noble leader he was for dark and gloomy days!

Whence had he learnt this spirit of happy forecast, which made him summon his converts amidst their sorest griefs to exult with joy unspeakable and glorified? Surely from Christ Himself. There is one passage especially that brings before us in the strongest light this feature of the Saviour's character and teaching which Peter has reflected here. St. John records it (xiii. 30), "Judas then having received the sop went immediately out; *and it was night*. Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, *and shall straightway glorify Him*." That was, I take it, the source of Peter's inspiration here.

But again another passage of gospel narrative finds plainest echo in St. Peter's words: "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have *not seen*, and *yet have believed*" (St. John xx. 29).

"Whom having *not seen*, ye love; in Whom, though now ye see Him not, *yet believing*, ye exult with joy unspeakable and glorified." There is a tender courtesy about these words, most thoroughly characteristic,

humble, respectful and true. They remind us of his own command, "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be *clothed** with humility." How could St. Peter be subject to these his converts? By working for them? Yes; but that is not enough for his humility. They have a blessing he cannot have. He is the first to remind them of it. He cannot flatter them by saying they are his own superiors in grace, he will make no comparisons at all in that respect, but he does rejoice most frankly that they are at least in one respect his own superiors in privilege. "Having not seen, ye love." He seizes upon that. He emphasizes that. He dwells upon it twice. He claims for them that ἀγάπη which he had been too modest, when Jesus questioned him, to vindicate for himself. His love to Jesus had its first roots in personal acquaintance, theirs was the pure result of living faith.

* ἐγκομβώσασθε—"girt with the slave's apron." A word peculiar to St. Peter, and plainly a reminiscence of Jesus in the upper room.

V.

“Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you : searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven ; which things the angels desire to look into.”—I PETER i. 10—12.

What trait in Peter's character do these words illustrate ? Surely his holy curiosity. The prophets inquired and searched diligently. The angels desired to look. And St. Peter, constant in his own eager questionings could fully sympathise with both. In chapters on “The Identity of Peter's Character,” and “Angelic Curiosity,” I shall enlarge upon this ; and so I will only briefly dismiss it now, asking my readers to remember that the word translated “look into” is really “stoop aside into,” the very word used thrice over in the Gospels of those who stooped aside into the tomb of Christ.

It is perhaps interesting to note that the next verse commands, “Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” When Peter

ran to the tomb he girded up the loins of his body, as well as of his mind. And grace was brought him, not all at once; hope first, but grace afterwards when Jesus Himself appeared.

What words of our Lord, uttered in Peter's presence, do these words echo? Surely the words when He turned Him privately to His disciples, and said: "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them" (St. Luke x. 23, 24).

What incidents in Peter's life do they remind us of?

Perhaps in no character in Holy Scripture are we more plainly able to trace the way in which the meaning of prophecy dawned gradually upon the understanding. St. Peter was ever growing not merely in grace but in knowledge. His last words to us are to exhort us to do the same.

Take first the meaning of the prophecy: "The Stone which the builders rejected is become the Head of the Corner." At first St. Peter could not understand the meaning of that prophecy at all. Then at the Crucifixion he learned the meaning of the rejection of the Stone. Yet later (Acts iv. 11, 12) he learned that

the kingdom of heaven was taken from the Jewish rulers. For it was a great crisis when the apostles first learned to go in the teeth of constituted spiritual authority. The word *πειθαρχεῖν*, "to be obedient to authority," had strong persuasions for them, and Jesus Himself had said, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. All that they bid you, do." It was not easy for these fishermen to realize that they themselves were to step into the rulers' forfeited place. And last of all he learnt that this kingdom taken from the Jews should be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof (1 Peter ii. 4—10), the world of Gentile Christendom.

Or take that prophecy of Joel, with which he began his first grand sermon: "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." It meant very much to him when he proclaimed it to all that expectant crowd that day. It meant much more when he in effect repeated it, years later, to the household of Cornelius: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." He hardly knew himself to what length those words were carrying him; but the Holy Ghost fell upon all who heard, and the old words were for St.

Peter lit up with a new glory ever afterwards. Each fresh conquest of the everlasting gospel—and in his days how marvellously it spread—was a fresh comment, a fresh illumination to him.

The application of these words to preaching, the modern prophesying, is full of interest, but it would carry us too far a-field. How often, for instance, a faithful preacher will suggest thoughts to another which he had failed to grasp, had hardly glimpsed at himself. How often sermons bear unexpected fruits, how much of the truth that is proclaimed is still unrealised truth! not necessarily hypocrisy, though we are apt to accuse it as such. How startled many a preacher will be at the last great day, to see his own words verified in ways of which he never dreamed! perhaps to his own bitter loss; more often, we hope, to his exceeding happiness. And as in the course of the ages God's plans of grace unfold themselves, how grand, as applied to the development of truth and knowledge, those words of Christ become: "I have sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour. Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours."

In all his later life, in his sermon in the Acts of the Apostles, and in both his epistles, St. Peter stands out before us as an earnest student of prophecy. No

doubt he was familiar with the prophets from his youth, but what gave him his special and peculiar bent in this direction was surely the teaching of Christ Himself, and beholding the prophecies verified in Him. Jesus Himself during those forty days after the Resurrection was the great Teacher of prophecy, opening the eyes of the disciples, Peter amongst the rest, to see the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and more especially the things concerning Himself: "Ought not Christ to have suffered and enter into His glory?" the very words are reflected in the epistle here, "The sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." His first great teacher was Jesus Himself, his second was the blessed Comforter.

Notice the words: "Them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." We have two distinct instances of St. Peter preaching the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; on the day of Pentecost and in the preaching to Cornelius. Each was an era in his apostolic life: a fresh revelation of truth, a fresh revelation of power. I know of no other preacher whose experience took just this form. And surely the form of St. Peter's experience shapes here as elsewhere the very form of his words. St. Paul speaks much of the Holy Spirit,

but rather of His indwelling power. It is reserved to St. Peter, who had taken part in that ten days' waiting and prayer, to speak of the Holy Ghost *sent from heaven*. It was reserved for St. Peter, who saw those tongues of fire descending and lighting on the disciples' heads, to write: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God *resteth upon you*" (1 Pet. iv. 14).

Some perhaps of the coincidences noted above may appear fanciful, and some far fetched, but no one I think can honestly study these opening verses of St. Peter as a whole without feeling that the Peter of the Gospels, the Peter of the Acts, is really pictured to us here; the character of the man in all its most salient features is here reflected for us to the very life. We catch, as we listen, more than one echo of Jesus' words to which St. Peter listened. We are reminded strongly and forcibly of more than one incident in which St. Peter took part. If these twelve verses studied in this simple way convey to us so much, may we not be encouraged to seek yet more and further light in all that follows them? I am convinced that no one can really and honestly do this, without rising from the study with a deepened conviction that the New Testament, so far as it concerns St. Peter's life and work, is a true living record

of a true living man. We see a strong wilful nature, not in the least predisposed to accept the leading facts of the gospel, led captive and held captive by the power of Christ. If the conversion of St. Paul is strong evidence for the faith of Christ, the conversion of St. Peter after he had three times denied our Lord before He suffered, is hardly less so, specially when we trace its beautiful and wonderful effect upon his character. The faith and trust in Jesus' Resurrection, and Sovereignty, and Power, these were the very making of this man. And surely the world must be turned completely upside down, black must be white and white must be black, before a lie can produce a character like this. Can any honest man believe it? Either his honesty or intellect must surely be in fault, and the alternative we leave to his own choice.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE IDENTITY OF ST. PETER'S CHARACTER.

IN his famous treatise upon "Christian Evidences," Archdeacon Paley has a chapter entitled "The Identity of Christ's Character." He points out, with that wonderful lucidity of arrangement and exposition which is perhaps his most distinguishing merit, how the character of Christ as presented to us in the earlier Evangelists and in St. John is really one and the same, although the actual incidents recorded are for the most part different. He illustrates this from Christ's mode of teaching, the way in which He drew instruction from all the little incidents of daily life or conveyed His teaching by some distinctly parabolic act, placing a child in the midst (Mark ix. 36), washing His followers' feet (John xiii.) ; from His reserve in retiring from popular tumult or applause, in refusing to let His claim to be the Messiah be openly declared ; and from other circumstances of His life and ministry. The Evangelists,

he says, can hardly be suspected of great dramatic inventiveness. Therefore these close and lifelike correspondences are the marks of truth.

The same argument may be applied with equal force to Peter's character. The four Evangelists describe him to us as he went about with our Lord in His ministry. St. Luke brings down the story to a yet later date. St. Paul in his epistles gives us some little glimpse of Peter's character. St. Peter has left two letters of his own, written in later life, and showing much of his inner mind and spirit in the most natural and unconscious way.

We have thus some six converging lines of testimony. And if throughout these six different writers we meet with one and the same St. Peter, one and the same man of clearly marked character, it is no slight evidence that all had the living man before them, and only said what was true, or more exactly, that the letters ascribed to St. Peter are really his, and the other writers were writing of one whom they knew.

In the present chapter I do not intend to do more than throw out a few suggestions which may put others on the track of thinking out this argument. No character in the New Testament stands out before us more

clearly than that of St. Peter. We seem to know him, in his weakness as well as in his strength, perhaps better than any other man. And yet to describe that character is quite impossible. It narrows it at once. All written descriptions disappoint us. The Bible writers are too wise to give us one. They let St. Peter speak for himself in his words and his acts, and we feel we have a real man. That is the truest way of showing us what he was. Therefore it is by no means my intention to give a full account of this matter, but merely to notice one and another little personal peculiarity as they are placed before us in the various accounts.

I. Notice first the *strong oscillations* of Peter's character. I have referred to these before, but now I bring them forward in this special point of view. All the Evangelists draw the same picture; all, for instance, agree in describing the assurance of Peter before his fall and the sudden revulsion of feeling which led him to deny his Lord: but consistency in describing the same event is nothing so remarkable from the present standpoint; the force of the argument comes out where the incidents are different, the characteristic the same in each. St. Mark furnishes us with no very striking incident in Peter's life unmentioned by the other Evangelists. But St. Matthew,

St. Luke, and St. John can each supply a contribution of their own. St. Matthew notices the walking on the sea. There is the same forwardness followed closely by the same failure of faith. St. Luke gives us the account of the first miraculous draught of fishes. Here, too, we find a like revulsion of feeling, but now in an opposite way. He says first of all, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord;" and then he leaves his all and follows Christ. St. John relates how the Saviour took a towel, and girded Himself, and washed His disciples' feet. And here, too, the same characteristic impulses break out. St. Peter says, "Lord, Thou shalt never wash my feet," and then directly afterwards, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

In all these cases the outward circumstances are very different, but the inward character that shows itself in the varying environment is always one and the same. Let us now extend our inquiry to the Acts of the Apostles. In the vision at Joppa (Acts x.), when the sheet was let down to him from heaven full of all manner of beasts clean and unclean, and he heard a voice saying to him, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat," the protest is prompt as ever on his lips, "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is

common or unclean." Thrice was this sturdy protest repeated before he gave way, but directly afterwards he said to Cornelius, "God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean." "Can any man forbid water that these should be baptised?"

St. Paul informs us in his Epistle to the Galatians of another similar incident and like revulsion of feeling. St. Peter had come down to Antioch, and mingled freely with the Gentiles at their meals; then, when certain came from James at Jerusalem and grumbled at this, Peter withdrew, fearing them of the circumcision. St. Paul rebuked him sharply and publicly, and St. Peter, as we infer, received the rebuke with all meekness, and consented once more sharply to alter his course, consistently inconsistent, and not ashamed to contradict himself where once he was shown to be wrong.

And now, if we look on to his own epistles, I think we shall find that this characteristic has left a trace even there. You may say that there the oscillations have all ceased. But perhaps no other apostle could have written with the same depth of practical experience the verses, "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering

wrongfully. *For what glory* is it if when ye be buffeted for your faults ye take it patiently?* but if when ye do well and suffer for it ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." It needed a great many rebuffs and corrections received patiently to render him able, with all the force of quiet conviction, to write a verse like that.

2. I pass to another characteristic : St. Peter's curiosity. In the Gospels we find him constantly asking questions. "Lord, to whom shall we go?" "Lord, we have left all and followed Thee. What shall we have, therefore?" "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake." "Declare unto us this parable." "Speakest Thou this parable to us or even to all?" "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Until seven times?"

So at the Last Supper St. Peter beckoned to John to ask who the traitor was. Even where all were asking questions, he must distinguish himself above the rest. So at the Lake of Tiberias he inquired in turn about John : "Lord, what shall this man do?"

The pressing forward into the tomb where St. John

* In these words, as in so many of Peter's, we seem also to have an echo of Christ's (St. Luke vi. 32, 33) : ποῶν κλέος and ποία χάρις—"what sort of glory?" and "what sort of thanks?"

was content to remain outside, and perhaps the attempting to walk on the waters, are marks of the same thing.

In the Acts of the Apostles we find that this same habit of asking questions stays by him, and he averts or confounds the opposition of both friends and foes by this device: "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts iv. 19). "What was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts xi. 17).

Now let us turn to the Epistles, to see if this characteristic has left its traces there. I do not mean simply what actual questions are asked in them, though questions are asked most forcible and pertinent and arguments closed by them. One we have already quoted: "What glory is it if when ye be buffeted for your faults ye take it patiently?" And it stands not alone, for yet again he asks, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

St. Peter's faculty of asking questions never deserted him, nor did his curiosity. To him we owe the expression, "Which things the angels desire to look into."

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He entered more than any other into the spirit of reverent inquiry with which the bright hosts of heaven search into the mysteries of grace ; they yearn to stoop aside into these things, as they had stooped aside into that sepulchre where once the body of the Lord had lain ; and had not St. Peter himself then shared their curiosity ? To him, too, we owe the expression about the old prophets, who inquired and searched diligently, searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of God that was in them did signify. St. Peter knew something also of that. By slow degrees he learnt the meaning of the vision upon the mount of glory ; and only bit by bit did he gather the meaning of his own words to Cornelius, the words which God had ordered him to speak.*

3. Another characteristic, closely allied with the preceding, is what Dr. Westcott describes as "the impatient energy which seems to be ever striving after the issues of things"—the loyal longing to realise the promise of Christ's kingdom on the earth, a longing impatient indeed at first, but disciplined thereafter to a

* Two words peculiar to St. Peter may be noted in this point of view : *ἐποπτεύω* (*ἐπόπτῃς*), a word implying admission to holy mysteries (1 Pet. ii. 12, iii. 2 ; 2 Pet. i. 16) ; *ἀλλοτριοεπίσκοπος* (1 Pet. iv. 15), a word apparently of St. Peter's own coining, and meaning "a busybody, or a prying person, in other men's affairs."

steady energy and a quiet, enduring hopefulness, illuminating all he wrote.

This feature we find from the very first. It shows itself in the one incident recorded by St. Mark alone, in his first chapter. Our Lord had been occupied with a very busy Sabbath day's work at Capernaum. Very early, before dawn, next day, He went forth to pray in solitude.* The people of Capernaum when they awoke at once began to inquire after the new Teacher, Who had made such a stir in the synagogue and wrought such cures at the door of Simon's house the night before. Peter enjoyed of course the reflected glory of all those wonderful cures. Inquiries flowed in to him. Where was his Lord? Surely now, he thought, the time of His kingdom had come; and so he went forth with his friends to seek for Him, with glowing words on his lips. And when they had found Him, they said, "All men seek for Thee." And Jesus at once gently checked his enthusiasm. "Let us"—not return to Capernaum to all this gaping and expectant crowd—"Let us go to the next villages, for therefore came I forth."

The same thing shows itself in Peter's impatience at

* This is noticeable as a first consecration of the Christian Sunday by Christ with prayer first and preaching afterwards.

hearing that Christ must suffer. "Pity Thyself, O Lord; this shall not be to Thee."

The same thing appears on the mount. "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us build three tabernacles: one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." He would have heaven in its enjoyment at once. So again in the question, "Why cannot I follow Thee now?" Even when the future appears to have no ray of light in it, he longs "to see the end." In the very court of Caiaphas, he went in and sat with the servants "to see the end." So in the question recorded at the beginning of the Acts, where Peter was probably spokesman, though we are not expressly informed of the fact—"Wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"—there is the same rebellion against suspense, the same intense desire to realise results.

St. Peter was always intensely eager for that regeneration, of which his Master had told him, when the Son of man should sit on His throne, and the apostles also on twelve thrones, judging the tribes of Israel. He is the one writer who brings to light the wonderful truth that man may hasten that day. Perhaps he inferred it from the words of our Lord Himself, "It is not for you to know the times and

the seasons, but ye shall receive power." At least the thought is present both in the Acts and in the Epistles : in the Acts (iii. 19 and following, R.V.), " Repent ye therefore and *turn again*, that your sins may be blotted out, *that so there may come* seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and *that He may send* the Christ Who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus, Whom the heavens must receive till the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began ;" in the Second Epistle (iii. 12), " Looking for and *hastening*" (R.V. margin) "*the coming of the day of God.*" This is entirely in keeping with Peter's character.

It would be easy to enlarge upon this subject and to multiply references and instances, but perhaps enough has been written to be suggestive, enough to show that there is a true unity throughout these diverse accounts, and that the unity is due to the fact that St. Peter was a real man, and those who wrote about him knew him well, and have showed him to us to the life, as he really acted and spoke.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANGELIC CURIOSITY.

“Which things the angels desire to look into.”—I PET. i. 12.

THIS is one of those rare glimpses we get of the spirit-world. The thought that this poor earth of ours is God's lesson-book for all His holy angels is one that adds great interest and dignity to human life. This idea underlies much of the teaching and many of the parables of Christ Himself. It is also a thought familiar to the apostle St. Paul. “Unto me, that am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Christ Jesus, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. iii. 8—10).

It may well be that St. Peter was familiar with these words when he wrote about the angels desiring to look. The context favours this idea. In both writers we have the thought of a great mystery long ages concealed, and opened out, not merely to men, but to angels as well, in the free proclamation of the gospel news.

But St. Paul presents the matter from the Divine, St. Peter from the angelic, point of view. St. Paul declares to us God revealing, St. Peter the angels inquiring. St. Paul is more impressed by the rich and manifold harmonies in the vast scheme of the Divine government, St. Peter by the eager and humble patience of the angelic students of God's great plan.

St. Peter by no means merely repeats St. Paul. He has a revelation of his own to make ; he opens out to us fresh fields of thought : and this revelation and these thoughts are coloured by his own previous experience. This word for "looking into," which literally means "to stoop aside into," is only used five times in the New Testament, thrice in connection with Christ's sepulchre. It is used Luke xxiv. 12 : "Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre ; and *stooping down*, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed wondering in himself at that which was come to pass." So in the parallel passage John xx. 5. So also a little later : "But

Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping, and as she wept she *stooped down* and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain" (John xx. 11).

The angels* lust to stoop aside into these mysteries. So did St. Peter. St. John was content at first to linger without; and when he entered, he grasped, as it were, by intuition the mighty truth. St. Peter's curiosity drove him to enter the tomb; then he departed wondering in himself. The yearning desire of the angels to know, their patient wonderment and yet imperfect realisation of the great mysteries they see, are the features specially preserved to us in Peter's revelation of the spirit-world.

Keen intellectual avidity would seem to be a mark of all angelic life. Through the abuse of it the wicked angels fell, and through the use of it the holy angels are ever raising themselves to fuller, more unassailable felicity. This speculative turn, this passion for knowledge, this intellectual forwardness, by whatever name you like to designate it, is not in itself a bad thing; and yet it is dangerous, for knowledge puffeth

* *ἐπιθύμουν*. There are good lusts as well as evil, for "the spirit lusteth against the flesh."

up, love edifieth. Imagination, that forward, delusive faculty, as Bishop Butler calls it, needs to be held in check by reverence and guided by humility. Through lack of this, the evil angels fell. To quote the words of Hooker, "Impossible it was that ever their will should change or incline to remit any part of their duty, without some object having force to avert their conceit from God, and to draw it another way; and that before they attained that high perfection of bliss, wherein now the elect angels are without possibility of falling. Of anything more than God they could not by any means like, so long as whatsoever they knew besides God, they apprehended it not in itself without dependency upon God; because so long God must seem infinitely better than anything which they could so apprehend. Things beneath them could not in such sort be presented unto their eyes but that therein they must needs see always how those things did depend upon God. It seemeth therefore that there was no other way for angels to sin, but by reflex of their understanding upon themselves; when, being held with admiration of their own sublimity and honour, the memory of their subordination unto God and their dependency on Him was drowned in this conceit; whereupon their adoration, love, and imitation of God could not choose but be also interrupted. The fall

of angels therefore was pride " (" Ecclesiastical Polity," Book I., chap. iv.).

" How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning ! how art thou cut down to the ground which didst weaken the nations ! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit " (Isa. xiv. 12—15). So wrote the prophet of the kingdom of Babylon ; but Christ Himself when He said, " I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven " (Luke x. 18), would teach us to apply the words to a yet more striking overthrow of overweening pride.

The bad angels aspired to ascend above the heights of the clouds, and so they fell. The good angels are only anxious to stoop down to look into the mysteries of God's revelation of grace, and so from their humble study of the earth and men beneath them they conceive, I imagine, continually higher and grander views of God above.

The fallen archangel himself, the god of this world, would appear sometimes in popular theology to be

regarded as almost omniscient. We have no warrant in the Bible for such a thought. The plans of God's grace are, we can hardly doubt, a great mystery even to Satan himself; even the pure angels are forced to veil their eyes to gaze into them: the moral fall of evil angels cannot have given them any advantage over their unfallen comrades in spiritual insight and intuition of right. Surely it must be an element of darkness, confusion, and blindness even to them. Yet the desire of knowing for its own sake, the mere avidity of intellectual power, may still be there as strongly as before, and being there, may constantly impel the wicked angels to work out their own ruin by tempting God. If Satan had fully known the mystery of God made man, he would hardly have courted his own defeat first in the wilderness and then upon Mount Calvary. In his irreverent striving to solve the great riddle of that sinless life, he worked out those very purposes of God which were concealed from him, and overthrew unwittingly—himself.

The good angels, when the Son of man was made a little lower than they, were ever eager to succour and to help Him, the evil angels were ever eager to hinder and to thwart, but both alike are represented in Holy Scripture as following that wonderful, spotless,

unparalleled life with a keenness of awakened interest that may well put to shame those men who can regard it with apathy and pass it by with contempt and stolid indifference. The very devils can teach us better than that. The devils believe and tremble.

A mere apathetic orthodoxy is not the highest ideal. A cut-and-dried theology that seems to have crushed the truth of God within the narrow bounds of human system, and to be conscious of no deficiencies, and to reach forth to no new conquests, as if there were nothing more to be known—some people call it soundness. The angels, according to them, are no sound theologians. None are more conscious than they of the limitless range of God's truth, though none more firmly settled about its grand outlines. There need not be any mistiness about our faith, there need not and ought not to be, but so long as God is infinite and we finite, there must be many mysteries. Faith without mystery is little less than a contradiction in terms.

There are some minds to whom all inquiry and speculation on matters of faith appears in itself little short of presumption and sin. There are others to whom each unsolved mystery appears like a shadow upon the glory of God, and they are driven to inquire.

Let me quote some words of my father's upon this point :—

“There may be found two opposite tendencies in Christians equally pious and sincere. Some instinctively confine themselves to the practical application of the plainest truths, and are even ready to condemn as rash presumption any attempt to pierce through the clouds that lie in the further distance. Others, on the contrary, have a deep longing for increase of light. Every cloud in the horizon seems to them like a thick veil, obscuring the light of God's love, and hinders them from reposing with the full assurance of peace and hope they desire to attain on the perfect wisdom and goodness of the Almighty. One instinct is more safe, but the other is more honourable. One is content to till the soil immediately before him ; the other, with peril and hazard, seeks to bring in rich pearls and treasures by crossing the seas of dangerous navigation. The same contrast is found in the business of outward life. Our country might be ruined if all, in their love of adventure, were to leave the farm and quiet homestead and become Arctic voyagers. But it never could have attained its wealth and greatness if the spirit of enterprise had not always led many of its sons to prefer a sea-

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life, with all its hazards, to the quiet life of home occupations, to the work of the ploughman and of the shepherd. Neither tendency is sinful in itself, but only in the excess. When the Christian is so content with the first elements of truth he has received, as to accept passively the opinions that float around him, and never to exercise his own thoughts on the deeper mysteries of creation, providence, and redemption, his religion will soon degenerate into mere formalism, his seeming faith into blind credulity.

“On the other hand, when young and ardent minds, with little reverence or humility, rush into the pathways of metaphysical speculation, unconscious of the danger which besets them alike from the narrow limits of their understanding and the secret moral obliquity of the sinful heart, they are only too likely to lose their way, and to make shipwreck of their faith on the dark mountains of pride and unbelief. . . . It is a noble enterprise to extend the boundaries of religious truth as apprehended by ordinary Christians, and to clear away some of those clouds which obscure from their minds the full vision of the goodness and wisdom of the Most High. But the price to be paid in such an effort is a closer conflict than other Christians may

have to undergo with questionings, and difficulties, and dark and gloomy thoughts, which, like the sons of Anak, resist the entrance of the soul into the good land of promise.

“To embark on such a voyage or engage in such a warfare in a spirit of vain self-confidence is rash and sinful, and may often have a ruinous and fatal issue. Our minds may easily be dazzled and confounded, and our steps may slide in slippery places, when we gaze without deepest reverence and prayer for light on the mysteries of life and death, the Fall, redemption, and eternal judgment.

“Those Christians may seem almost to be envied who till their own little homestead and never launch their barque on the wide and trackless ocean that leads to undiscovered truths. This childlike faith has a beauty of its own, but a manly faith is still more excellent and beautiful” (Birks, “Victory of Divine Goodness,” pp. 16—19).

These words put more plainly than I could do the distinction in men’s minds with regard to the search after truth. Now the devil has two schemes of delusion. Some he persuades that ignorance is sin. The quiet Christian becomes conscious of some cloud on the horizon of his faith. Satan at once whispers

that clouds are not from God. "There must be something most wicked in you if you permit your mind to be overshadowed by any doubt." Well, if any man, woman, or child is ever tempted like that, they may find great comfort in what St. Peter reveals to us about the holy angels. No taint or breath of suspicion assails their spotless purity. Yet there are things they do not know and do not understand. Ignorance is not sin, else were the angels sinners as well as we. But if this form of assault prove a failure, the devil falls back upon another. He has a second scheme whereby to lead us to a false despair. He tries to persuade us that all religious inquiry is little short of impious presumption. "I know the pride and naughtiness of thy heart. To see the battle art thou come down. With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?" "Why art thou leaving plain little practical duties to pry into matters too high and too great for thee?" Well, the Christian may often answer boldly with David—at least, if his practical duties have not been left on one side, he may most confidently answer—"What? Is there not a cause?" And here, too, St. Peter affords consolation from the example of God's holy angels. Ceaseless and constant they are in daily humble

ministries of love, yet they deem it no wrong, no sin, to peer into the deepest mysteries of providence and grace. If speculation and inquiry are sinful and wicked and wrong, why do the holy angels so greatly desire to look ?

I cannot leave this subject of the angels without quoting two more passages of great beauty, the first from Archbishop Leighton's well-known commentary, the second from Professor Godet's "*Studies in the Old Testament.*"

1. "The angels look upon what they have seen already fulfilled with delight and admiration, and what remains—viz., the full accomplishment of this great work in the end of time—they look upon with desire to see it finished. It is not a slight glance they take of it, but they fix their eyes and look steadfastly on it, viz., that mystery of godliness God manifest in the flesh, and, it is added, seen of angels.

"The Word made flesh draws the eyes of those glorious spirits, and possesses them with wonder to see the almighty Godhead joined with the weakness of a man, yea, of an infant, He that stretcheth forth the heavens bound in swaddling clothes ! And, to pass all the wonders of His life, this is beyond admiration : that the Lord of life was subject to death, and that

His love to rebellious mankind moved Him both to take on and lay down that life.

“It is no wonder that angels admire these things and delight to look upon them ; but it is strange that we do not so. They view them steadfastly, and we neglect them ; either we consider them not at all, or give them but a transient look, half an eye. That which was the great business of the prophets and Apostles both for their own times and to convey them to us we regard not, and turn our eyes to foolish wandering thoughts which angels are ashamed at. They are not so concerned in this great mystery as we are ; they are but mere beholders in comparison of us ; yea, they seem rather to be losers in some way, in that our nature, in itself inferior to theirs, in Christ Jesus is exalted above theirs. We bow down to the earth and study and grovel in it, rake into the very bowels of it, and content ourselves with the outside of the unsearchable riches of Christ, and look not within it ; but they, having no will or desire but for the glory of God, being pure flames of fire burning only in love to Him, are no less delighted than amazed with the bottomless wonders of His wisdom and goodness shining in the work of our redemption.

“It is our shame and folly that we lose ourselves and

our thoughts in poor childish things, and trifle away our days we know not how, and let these rich mysteries lie unregarded. They look up upon the Deity itself with continual admiration, but that they look down to this mystery is yet another wonder. We give them an ear in public, and in a cold, formal way stop conscience's mouth with some religious performances in private, and no more ; but to have deep and frequent thoughts, and to be ravished in the meditation of our Lord Jesus, once on the Cross and now in glory,—how few of us are acquainted with this !

“ We see here excellent company and examples not only of the best men that have been—we have them for fellow-servants and fellow-students—but if that can persuade us, we may all study the same lesson with the very angels, and have the same thoughts with them. This the soul doth which often entertains itself with the delightful admiration of Jesus Christ and the redemption He hath wrought for us ” (Leighton, “ Commentary on St. Peter,” 1 Peter i. 12).

2. “ The second passage is from Professor Godet's Old Testament studies, and I quote from Lyttelton's English translation. After describing in eloquent terms the work of angels in connection with creation and the ministry of Christ, Professor Godet proceeds,—

“Ever since the foundation of the Church their attention has been fixed upon this masterpiece of Divine love. They contemplate it with adoration as a work greater than nature, a creation more glorious and enduring than that of the six days. As St. Paul says, ‘to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.’ Upon this spiritual stage the angels contemplate with an ever-renewed rapture the manifold means by which the Father brings to the Son the hearts of sinners and saves that which had been lost. And there is joy amongst them each time that an ineffable smile, passing over the face of the Father, makes known to them that one of His children who had been dead is now restored to life.

“While thus contemplating they learn, they grow, they rejoice ; sometimes also they weep, and always they adore. But they do more than this. Once they were agents in the history of the Master ; now they are so in that of His Church. ‘Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?’ The greatest among them do not disdain to keep specially close to the weak and to the lowest amongst the faithful. Jesus

Himself declares this to us, without, however, giving us any right to infer from these words that each human being has an angel personally attached to himself.

“ ‘But of what use,’ you will ask, ‘is this intervention of angels? Cannot God help us by His providence and by His omnipotence without having recourse to these created ministers?’ Assuredly He could do so, but to be consistent you must also ask, ‘Why does the newborn infant on its entrance into life find loving hands ready to care for and tend it? Could not God clothe and nourish it Himself by His power?’ Or, again, do you ask why, in the danger through which you have just passed, God saved your life by means of one of your fellow-men instead of doing so by His own hand? The reason is that it is not God’s will that that bond, so full of sweetness, which for ever unites the benefited to his benefactor, should exist only between Himself and ourselves. The love of God is great enough to make Him wish not to love or to be loved alone. He values love, which is the very essence of His being, too highly not to labour by every means to multiply it between all the beings He has created as well as between Himself and them. This is the end and aim of all His dispensations, negative and positive. His

love for all, that of all for Him and of all for one another, makes the glory of His kingdom. And this is why it is His will that we should all help one another, and that this relation of mutual assistance should exist even between angels and men. Thus He prepares for the time when these two races, more widely differing than Jews and Gentiles, shall be closely united in His kingdom, and shall form but one body.

“Finally, in the end of time, this relation between men and angels, first contracted at the Creation, will be sealed by a supreme event. On the one hand, St. Paul says that men will judge angels; *i.e.*, holy men will judge the rebel angels. On the other hand, the angels will sift the tares from the wheat among mankind, garnering up the latter and burning the former; such is the declaration of Jesus. And after each of these two classes of beings shall have thus rendered homage to the Divine holiness in the presence of the other, the end of God’s dispensations to both will be realised. He Who has determined to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and are in earth, will join both men and angels in one under this single Head.

“As then the two great streams in the old world,

Jews and Gentiles, after successive approaches, were at last united in the Church, so the two great classes of beings of whom the moral universe is composed, men and angels, after being brought into a series of beneficent relations to each other, will submit in concert to the sceptre of Jesus Christ, the Creator and Lord of angels, the Creator, Saviour, and Lord of men, the Judge of all.

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“That was a magnificent duet which resounded in the Church when for the first time the believers from amongst the Jews and converts from among the Gentiles united their voices to sing the new song, the hymn of salvation. They both celebrated the marvellous works of God, but each in his own manner, the former praising Him above all things for His faithfulness in the fulfilment of the promises made to their fathers, the latter publishing His mercy towards the people to whom He promised nothing, but who, whatever might be their unworthiness, had notwithstanding received all. It will be a hymn set for two voices, even more rich and sublime, with which the elect angels and glorified men will celebrate together the work of God, but in differing tones;—the former, in that rich and

sonorous voice of which nothing has ever marred the purity, announcing the faithfulness of the Most High which so magnificently rewards their own faithfulness ;—the latter, in a graver tone and more restrained accent, as becomes beings whose song is born amidst tears, glorifying the grace of Him Who can blot out even unfaithfulness : those setting before us men by their example that ladder of light upon which it is possible to ascend to God without once departing from the truth, to attain to perfection, not without trial, but without falling, to realise progress in pure good,—thus glorifying the holiness and truth of that God Who does not permit that sin should ever appear to be necessary or even in itself useful ;—and, on the other side, 'we men responding to them and pointing in deep humility to the dark abysses of sin into which we had thrown ourselves, but from which the hand of God has drawn us by unparalleled marvels,—thus glorifying in their eyes that grace which where sin abounded did much more abound, and which in thus transforming even evil into good has accomplished the greatest of all miracles. From the midst of the two races, henceforth to form but one, there will then rise, in varying tones, that united hymn (last word of the history

of free beings) of which the song of the angels and of the shepherds on Christmas Eve was the prelude,—

“ ‘ PRAISE BE TO GOD, AND TO THE LAMB, WHO SITTETH UPON
THE THRONE !

“ ‘ ALLELUIA ! ’ ”

CHAPTER XVIII.

ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL.

“ **H**E that praiseth St. Peter, doth not blame St. Paul.” This old and useful adage is striking testimony to the fact that long after the leaders of Christian thought had ceased to dispute amongst themselves which should be the greatest, their followers still continued the strife. St. Peter had learnt in the garden of Gethsemane, and during the days that followed, for ever to drop such thoughts. But those who learnt from St. Peter and St. Paul were not always so wise. One said, I am of Paul ; another, I of Apollos ; another, I of Cephas ; another, I of Christ. The echoes of this old controversy continue to the present day, and it has been one of the most persistent and painstaking efforts of modern criticism to prove the existence of a great rivalry and opposition between the two great apostles. There is another good proverb that says “Comparisons are odious,” and this, in its

true sense and meaning, is supported by the authority of Paul himself, when he speaks of some, who measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

It would certainly be most unwise and most presumptuous on our part to institute any comparison or to pronounce any verdict about the relative greatness of Peter and Paul. Each had his own special work and each was fitted to do it. There is no room to speak or conceive of rivalry and jealousy between the two, but there are certain points connected with their relationship well worthy of our study, and which may simply serve to heighten our reverence and admiration for both.

The passage appointed as the Gospel for the Conversion of St. Paul, is written in the 19th of St. Matthew, the 27th verse, and ends with the words, "But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." The words form part of our Lord's reply to St. Peter, when he enquired what they, the apostles, should have, because they had left all and followed Christ. Their first reference is to the whole apostolic college; and so St. Paul declares, "I think God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels,

and to men. . . . We are made as the filth of the world, and are as the off-scouring of all things to this day." But the expression of Christ would seem to have a far more personal reference to Peter, who asked the question, and hence its choice upon this special festival. It is followed by the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, where those called in at the last moment have the same reward as those who have borne the burden and heat of the day. Now there is, undoubtedly, a sense in which St. Paul was at once the last and the first of the apostles: the last in the time of his call, the foremost in labours for Christ. The fact is undeniable, whether we look at the Churches he founded, the letters he has left us, or at the sufferings which he endured. St. Paul assures us so himself. "I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God that was in me."

I think sometimes we are rather apt to be staggered at the self-assertiveness of Paul in some of his letters. We take him perhaps at his word, and are quite ready to think that he has really *become a fool* in glorying, forgetting that the attitude of his converts towards himself and his message *compelled* him to enter on this most distasteful task. Yet if his word holds good for the one thing, it ought to hold good for both. It

is not easy for us to realise the force of this compulsion.

It is in his letters to Galatia and Corinth that St. Paul has more especially to defend himself against those who depreciated his work as compared with that of the great apostle Peter. It is remarkable then, that in his first letter to Corinth, describing the appearances of the Lord Jesus, he draws a sharp, marked contrast between his brother apostle and himself. And what is the character of this contrast? He begins with the name of St. Peter, and he concludes with his own. "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. Last of all, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles; that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God." The fact becomes more striking when we remember that the only other record of this appearance to Peter occurs in the Gospel of Luke (xxiv. 34), himself the friend and follower of Paul. St. Mark, the close companion of Peter, does not mention it. Does this look like jealousy or rivalry? St. Paul might just as well have mentioned Christ's appearance to Mary or to the women first.* But he will begin with

* No doubt the undue prominence asserted to themselves by women in the Church at Corinth may have had something to do with this

St. Peter and end with himself, and that too, though there was a strong party in the Church at the time busy depreciating him compared with his brother apostle.

We pass on to the Epistle to the Galatians. Here St. Paul gives us almost a connected account of his personal relations with St. Peter from his conversion onwards. Three years after his conversion, St. Paul came to Jerusalem to question Peter with regard to the gospel he preached, and stayed with him fifteen days. The account implies the greatest respect for the older and earlier apostle, whilst still maintaining the full independence of Paul. In the second chapter we have an account of events which took place fourteen years later. As written in our English version, and more especially as sometimes read in church, the terms in which James, Cephas, and John are mentioned, appear almost disparaging. The original Greek, however, bears quite another complexion. The words, "James, Cephas, and John, who *seemed* to be pillars," appear in English, to have a strong touch of scorn; as though the older apostles had something pretentious about themselves or their work, some sort of seeming that

omission, but still it leaves the result simply as stated in the text—St. Peter first, St. Paul the last of all.

was not really the truth. The real sense of the words is this. "They who are *rightly* of reputation, whatever they formerly were (as very companions of Christ) it makes no difference to me. God accepts no man's person. And these who had rightly been held of such high repute, had nothing to add to my gospel. They simply acknowledged my mission. They simply welcomed me on equal terms with themselves, only with an acknowledged and separate sphere of work, that office which I am ready to magnify, the apostleship of the Gentiles." Such is the true force and bearing of St. Paul's words, and the very fact that he felt it so necessary to consult the apostles of the circumcision, lest by any means he had run, or should run in vain, shows not indeed that he was entirely dependent upon their judgment, but at least that he placed the highest value upon their sympathy and cordial co-operation with himself. He thought no pains too great that could secure that sympathy, no price—except the sacrifice of principle—too heavy to be paid for it.

Before going on to consider the record of the difference between the two apostles described in the verses that follow, we will consider how little occasion either had to boast in face of the other.

If there were one thing more close than another to

the heart of St. Paul, it was the conversion of his own countrymen, the Jews. That was the task on which the whole force of his giant will and intellect was naturally bent. His whole energies yearned for an outlet this way. He could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren according to the flesh. No one appeared more fitted to outward seeming to be a great apostle to the Jews. He was a strict Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrim, taught at Gamaliel's feet. Who could speak to the Jews with such convincing authority as he? Thoughts such as these occurred to him. He tells us that they did. In his speech on the castle steps he lets us into his confidence and shows us what he wished.

“And it came to pass, that, when I had returned to Jerusalem, and while I prayed in the temple, I fell into a trance, and saw Him saying unto me, Make haste and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; because they will not receive of thee testimony concerning Me. (R. V.) And I said, Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on Thee: and when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And He said unto me, Depart: for I

will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." Thus the learned rabbi had to stand quietly aside from the work on which his whole soul's intention was fixed, and to see it committed to the humble fisherman of Galilee. This was the sacrifice with which his labours for Christ began—no little sacrifice. There was not likely then to be any touch of pride in his words: "For He that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision, wrought for me also unto the Gentiles." And there is a beautiful humility in his words to the Ephesian converts: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;"—amongst the out-cast heathen, the wealth of the Jewish Messiah. That which had seemed his special cross, faithfully borne became his special privilege.

On the other hand, St. Peter said: "Brethren, ye know how that a good while ago, God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe." St. Peter was willing, even as he said the words, to step aside from that work, and to hold out the right hand of fellowship to him who had been a persecutor and injurious, and own his special mission to preach to the heathen world.

And now we come to the dispute between these

men. When Peter came down to Antioch, Paul resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned. It seems a lofty position for Paul, the latest recruit of the apostles' company, to take. But if we look at it closely there was very little after all that could have flattered his pride. Think of the strict Pharisee rebuking the Galilean peasant for being a closer adherent of the law than he himself! How strangely the tables had turned! Much, very much, has been made of this contest. It sprang from an error of judgment on Peter's part. He would not deny the equal claim of the Gentiles to salvation without the observance of the Jewish law. But for Jews to mingle freely with the Gentiles at their meals involved ceremonial defilement. The Jewish Christians still observed the law. Much inconvenience and much offence would be caused. St. Peter, of course, was most anxious that all should be made as simple and easy as possible for his part of the Church, the Christians of the circumcision. It is not a matter for great surprise that he yielded to strong pressure on a point which appeared to him—though wrongly—to be one of expediency and not of principle. St. Paul keeping steadily in view the needs and claims of the Gentile converts, and with deeper insight into the real bearings of the case, rightly

maintained the law of Christian charity as paramount to that of a mere legal purity. St. Paul perceived that Peter unwittingly was introducing the principle of caste within the Church ; raising an artificial barrier between man and man, Christian and Christian. He knew the result would be to drive the Gentiles, for the sake of fellowship on equal terms, both to be circumcised and keep the law. He had already agreed with Peter that this for them was quite unnecessary. St. Peter recognised fully the justice of Paul's view. In his first epistle we find him laying marked stress on this full equality of Gentile and Jew : writing to Gentiles, plainly he says, " Who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God ; who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."

If we would further note how Peter took the rebuke of Paul, we must turn to his second epistle, and there we read: " Wherefore beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation ; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you ; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things ; in which are some things hard to

be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing that ye know these things, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

These are St. Peter's last recorded words. Next to the glory of Christ Himself, he puts the praise of Paul. He refers expressly to his letters, endorses them with his own solemn sanction, and places them apparently in full equality with the Old Testament law. This is a thing not startling to us in any way. We are accustomed to it, but it was very startling then. Four hundred years had passed since the last prophet. Antiquity so soon surrounds writing with a halo of reverence, or else consigns it to oblivion. To put words of which the ink was scarcely dry on an absolute level with the Old Testament books, must have seemed to many of those to whom St. Peter wrote a wonderful thing indeed. Amongst these letters so eulogized was that to the Galatians. That letter contains his own severe rebuke. Nor can we say that Peter referred to other letters and not to that. There are distinct traces

in his epistles that Peter had read this very epistle of Paul's. Compare Galatians v. 13; and 1 Peter ii. 16.

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion of the flesh, but by love serve one another."

"As free, and not using your liberty as a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."

Moreover, the same Greek word,* and not a common one, is used, when Peter warns them "lest being *led away* by the error of the wicked, they fall from their own steadfastness," as was used by St. Paul when writing to Galatia he said, "insomuch that Barnabas also *was carried away* with their dissimulation."

Thus indirectly St. Peter carries back our minds not merely to the very epistle, but to the very passage in which he himself was condemned. This is a beautiful instance of Christian grace. The passage more directly referred to by St. Peter is this from the second chapter of Romans: "Despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance," etc. The words were likely to make the deepest impression on Peter, for he had witnessed Judas, and he had been saved by God's forbearance himself.

Other points worthy of notice will readily suggest

* συναπήχθη . . . συναπαχθέντες.

themselves. It is refreshing to find St. Peter himself so naively confessing that in St. Paul's epistles were some things hard to be understood ; it is encouraging to know that even apostolic inspiration by no means superseded the need of active mental exertion, but rather called it forth into full play. And here St. Peter would seem most frankly to own the intellectual supremacy of his great brother in arms. He has the profoundest respect for the wisdom given to him.

It is interesting to think of these two great heroes of the faith, whose course had often lain wide apart, but who were joined not merely by the fellowship of a common faith, but by brief periods of actual intercourse and by many personal links through Mark and Silas and other mutual friends; it is interesting to think how "lovely and pleasant they were in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided." Both were martyred—some say upon the self-same day—in that great World Metropolis, the Seven-hilled city of Rome.

It is strange that St. Peter's successors in that great capital should claim for themselves a freedom from all error, which he himself in this last message to the Church distinctly repudiates upon his own behalf.

NOTE ON THE GOSPEL OF THE CIRCUMCISION.

THE thoughts of the last chapter can hardly fail to suggest the question : What has become of the great apostolate of the circumcision now ? How few there are who take any interest at all in carrying the tidings of the gospel to the Jew ! The supporters of Jewish Missions are for the most part found in only one section and school of thought in the Church ; and even within the number of so-called evangelicals, for six who take an interest in evangelising the heathen, we find barely one who does anything to forward the cause of Christ's gospel amongst the Jews. Ought this to be really so ? It strangely reverses the proportions of labour in apostolic times. I cannot, of course, in a brief note enter on the large question of all the special claims of the Jews on Christian sympathy. I can but urge a single argument.

The Church of England owes its origin to the

labours of St. Paul. I do not say that he ever set foot on English soil, but no one can deny him the honour of being the great evangelist of Europe. The Church of England further would seem in a special way to have inherited the mission of St. Paul. The great cathedral in our great metropolis is dedicated to his name. London is to the modern world what Rome was to that little ancient world that nestled so snugly about the Mediterranean coasts. London is the great centre and mart of all the modern nations, and London is now in a wonderful way the head-quarters of Christendom.

Power brings with it responsibility. We are in touch with every people on earth, and as a Christian race we are morally bound not to be ashamed of our holy faith, but to take it with us wherever the British flag with the triple cross emblazoned on it is seen to fly. England may well say "*Væ mihi si non evangelisavero,*" and it is matter for the profoundest gratitude to see how widely this great truth is coming to be recognised. But then if England is indeed to take up the work of St. Paul, should she not set about it in something of the spirit of that holy apostle? He was the great apostle of the Gentiles. He magnified his office. And yet in all his preaching he laid down this

invariable and unbending principle : " To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." Not only did he preach it, but constantly in all his work he practised it. And his example cannot be thought of small account. There are Jews still in millions, waiting to be evangelised. Many are in the very midst of us. There is a growing readiness amongst them to hear and receive the truth. The duty, the principle remains the same. And yet how few there are who think of it ! How is it that those who have succeeded to the mission of the great apostle have caught so little of the spirit that moved and animated all his work ? I should indeed be thankful if these studies in the life and character of Peter, moved any one of my readers to turn their attention to that great work which was committed to his care, the need for which has certainly not yet ceased as some would have us suppose, whilst the energy now expended on it is miserably out of all proportion to the dimensions of the sacred task. Peter has need of successors as well as Paul, and it is but of small avail to have a pontiff seated on his throne, if there be few or none in many parts to carry on his special work with all its especial trials.

Missions to Jews I know are not popular ; I suppose they never will be fashionable ; but for men

or women professing the faith of Jesus, the question can never be, are they popular? nor even, are they what *I* like? The only question must be, "Are they right?" are they according to the mind of Christ?

St. Peter and St. Paul must ever remain to us two of the greatest interpreters of Christian duty. Where they are both agreed, there seems little room for us to differ from them. The whole life of one was spent in winning Jews to the Saviour; and if the whole life of the other received a different mission, it was from no lack of earnestness or zeal in this behalf. His most impassioned prayers were for this work even when he was not in person permitted to take a leading part in it.

Our own sweet Church poet George Herbert has caught some little of this fervour of St. Paul, and in his own quaint way pleads earnestly to God for the welfare of Israel, the actual nation of the Jews. I cannot do better than close with his lines, which may appeal to some whom words of mine would hardly reach:—

“Poor nation, whose sweet sap and juice
Our scions have purloined, and left you dry;
Whose streams we got by the Apostle’s sluice
And use in baptism, while ye pine and die,
Who by not keeping once became a debtor,
And now by keeping lose the letter.

“O that my prayers ! mine, alas !

O that some angel might a trumpet sound
At which the Church, falling upon her face,
Should cry so loud until the trump were drowned,
And by that cry of her dear Lord obtain
That your sweet sap might come again !”

DATE DUE

APR 23 1983	MAR 27 1985		
APR 25 1983			
JUN 22 1983	MAR 16 1988		
	MAR 30 1988		
JUN 15 1983	APR 13 1988		
	APR 12 1988		
AUG 15 1983	AUG 07 2007		
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DEC 2 1983	DEC 17 2008		
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